

March 2022 News Update

In this edition...

- Upcoming Programs in Spring 2022
 - News from The Friends: CCC Repairs; Educational Videos Update
 - News from Our Partners: MAFPG is Hiring!
 - Winter Happenings: Program Recap
 - Volunteer Spotlight: Rona Neri
 - Upcoming Meetings
 - Photo of the Month
 - Reminders
-

Spring is on the way!



There is still some snow lingering on the ground, but rest assured, spring is on the way! This month, look and listen for migrating songbirds like the Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, the Bluebird and American Robin. You may even start to see some hibernating animals venture out on mild days. It's too early to look for spring wildflowers, but if you're excited about the growing season, join us for a tour of Forward Garden in April. Read on and mark your calendars!

Photo credit: Aaron Leist

Upcoming Programs

Forward Garden Tour

Saturday, April 9th, 2022 at 1:00PM

Speaker: Matt Lechmaier, Farm Manager



Does the “Forward Garden” road sign on Old Sauk Road adjacent to the Pope Farm Conservancy intrigue you? Then, we invite you to join us for a tour of the gardens with Farm Manager Matt Lechmaier on Saturday, April 9th, 2022 at 1:00p.m. **Registration is required!**

Matt will provide a brief overview of Forward Garden's first two growing seasons, including crops grown, outlets served, challenges encountered, and community partnerships formed. He will also share plans for the upcoming growing season, including volunteer opportunities, production plans, and new outlets they are planning to serve. You'll likely be inspired by the thoughtful and heartfelt way Matt plans and works for the sake of ALL who come to the local food pantries.

Space is limited to 30 attendees, so we ask that all attendees register in advance. Be sure to sign up on our website to reserve your spot. If registration is full, please email us to join the wait list. We may offer a second group tour on April 10th to accommodate additional attendees if needed.

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

Pope Farm Elementary School Tour

Thursday, May 26th, 2022 (7:00 - 7:45p.m.)

Speakers: Jessica Taylor (Principal) and Alex Schutz (Science Specialist Teacher)



Join us on Thursday, May 26, 2022, at 7PM for an inside look at Pope Farm Elementary School. This is the newest school in the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District and serves Kindergarten through fourth grade. The school officially opened in Fall 2020, then welcomed its first students for in-person learning in February 2021. The tour will be led by Principal Jessica Taylor and Science Specialist Teacher Alex Schutz.

You will be delighted by the unique and beautiful interior design. Each grade level has its own designated icon and color scheme. "The graphics on the walls bring in natural elements from the surrounding Pope Farm Conservancy to create a visual identity for the architectural and interior design theme," says designer Lauren McClone.



In addition to the tour, Alex Schutz will talk about the many ingenious ways he uses Pope Farm Conservancy to teach elementary school-aged students about earth science, geology, botany, biology, conservation, ecology, and more! Alex really has a knack for teaching science in a way that kids will remember and enjoy.

This tour is FREE and OPEN to the public. No registration needed. We will meet at the front entry on the east side of the building. Parking is available at the school. Address: 816 Schewe Rd, Verona, WI 53593.

News from the Friends

Possible Spillway Repair

The CCC spillway has developed cracks in the concrete that are now threatening its structure long term. The spillway was built in 1938 by the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Soil Conservation Service and is a State of Wisconsin historical point of interest. The Friends are investigating the possibility of treating those cracks to preserve the structure. If the Friends can develop a viable plan, we will seek approval from the Town of Middleton to repair it.



Photo: Concrete cracks are threatening the CCC spillway structure

New Education Videos in process

The FOPFC Education Team is in the process of developing four new video series on the following topics:

- The Geology Story of Pope Farm Conservancy
- Interesting Mammals at Pope Farm Conservancy
- Interesting Birds at Pope Farm Conservancy
- Interesting Pollinators at Pope Farm Conservancy



Each series contains 5-7 different videos, and each video is about 5 minutes in length. These educational videos are designed to teach students and the public about the natural world at Pope Farm Conservancy. We expect that several of these will be done by Summer 2022 and will be accessible on our website. New signage will also be posted in the conservancy containing QR codes that link to the videos on our website. This will allow visitors to the conservancy to access and watch the videos on site using a smart device or mobile phone.

We are so grateful for the contributions from local experts, professionals, educators, and community members as we continue the development of these videos.

News from Our Partners

Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens is Hiring!



In February 2022, the Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens (MAFPG) received an "Equitable Recovery Grant" from the Wisconsin Department of Administration. This grant will provide funding for several internship positions for the next three years! As a result, MAFPG is actively hiring for 3 positions:

- [Public Engagement Leader VISTA Member](#) - In partnership with Americorps VISTA
- [Witte-Schulte Student Intern](#)
- [Pantry Garden Intern, Lacy Garden](#) - Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Interviews will take place in March but there's still time to apply.

Visit <https://foodpantrygardens.org/> for more details.

Winter Happenings

Recap: Winter Walk on February 13th, 2022

Despite the cold temperature of just 12 degrees Fahrenheit on Sunday, February 13th, six brave souls enjoyed the bright sunshine and comradery for an hour's worth of hiking at the Pope Farm Conservancy. Conditions weren't ideal with a bit of ice to avoid here and there. But, getting outside, getting good exercise, and getting to enjoy the views in the conservancy, including that of Lake Mendota from the top of the hill, are unbeatable!!



Photo and Story by Diane Smidt

Volunteer Spotlight: Rona Neri

This month, we would like to introduce you to a volunteer who has played a major role in the development of our newest video series, Interesting Birds of Pope Farm Conservancy.

Her name is Rona Neri, and she has put in a tremendous amount of work writing the scripts and providing some of the photos for the bird videos. Her photographs are really quite stunning. She is, after all, an award-winning nature photographer!

Rona has been coming to Pope Farm Conservancy to take photographs of the wildlife for quite some time. “I really love to go out there in the spring and summer,” she says. “There are so many birds, and it’s not hard to find them. The bluebirds are super active, which is always fun.”



This video project has been a good fit for Rona because of her passion for conservation, education, and of course, photography. “I’m always trying to expand my skill level and my knowledge of wildlife and further any kind of conservation cause.” Rona likes to visit different state natural areas where there’s lots of good wildlife activity. Pope Farm’s combination of prairies, valleys, hills, and the oak savanna provides a great habitat for them. “It’s a beautiful place for wildlife,” she remarks. “They feel safe there, and there’s lots for them to eat.”



One of her favorite memories of Pope Farm was when she was hiking, and a little fawn came out of the crop fields. “[It] watched me for a while then came quite close,” she recalls. “I live for those little interactions with wildlife where you can make eye contact and they tolerate you. And you can capture an image like that. It’s my favorite thing in the world.”

She once spent three hours waiting for the perfect shot of an Indigo Bunting on a sunflower. She had to work for it, but she said it’s one of her favorite images that she’s ever taken.



Rona started out as a nature enthusiast and got increasingly interested in nature photography over the past 10 years or so. “Any day that I’m hiking with my camera counts as a good day, whether or not I get the shot I’m searching for.” She now owns her own business, Rona’s Photography, where she sells prints of her photographs as well as an assortment of greetings cards. As her business expanded over the years, she was able to travel to South Africa for a couple of weeks to take photos of animals on safari. “It was incredible for me!” she said. She even won a National Wildlife Federation photography award and received national recognition for one of her photographs.

Starting in May, you can see her work on display at [Gallery 800 UBD](#) in Madison. Her solo exhibit will run

May 6 – September 23, 2022, and include images from her Africa safari trip, as well as lots of Wisconsin imagery. Her favorite Indigo Bunting shot from Pope Farm will be among them.

Be sure to visit her website: www.ronasphotography.com

Thank you, Rona, for your sharing your beautiful photography with the Friends and for your contributions to our educational videos. We are so grateful for your volunteer efforts!

Upcoming FOPFC Meetings

Education Team Meeting – VIRTUAL

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 22nd, 2022 (6:00 – 7:30 p.m.)

Zoom Link: Email Doug Piper (dlpiper0413@gmail.com) for the meeting link.

Discussion topics: We will be discussing spring activities with the school district, and the possibility of sharing past lesson plans with Pope Farm Elementary School. Looking at the possibility of field trips next fall, and will begin work on the Native American Story content for a video series.

Programs Committee Meeting-VIRTUAL

Next Meeting, Wednesday, March 23rd, 2022 (6:30 p.m.)

Zoom Link: Email Diane Smidt (diane.smidt@gmail.com) for the meeting link.

Discussion topics: The committee will be finalizing events for the 2022 season. If interested in event planning, all are welcome to join this meeting. Otherwise, please send event ideas to Diane Smidt (diane.smidt@gmail.com).

Reminders

Renew Your Membership

Just a reminder...you can now renew your membership online here:

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

Or you can renew by mail by sending a check (payable to Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy) to:

FOPFC, 10333 Blackhawk Road, Middleton, WI 53562.

If you have already renewed your membership, THANK YOU! We hope you enjoy being a part of our community. For questions regarding your membership, please email us at info@popefarmconservancy.org.

Photo of the Month



Spring is on the way! Look for bluebirds returning to Pope Farm in March. Photo by Rona Neri.

Connect with FOPFC Online

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

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

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.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!