

November 2021 News Update

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“November at its best - with a sort of delightful menace in the air.”

— Anne Bosworth Greene

Photo by Jack Sherman

Fall Happenings at PFC

The History of the Land Talk by Mel Pope

On Saturday, October 16th, Mel Pope gave a talk about the History of the Land to members of the Elver family and the public. Those present from the Elver family are descendants of some of the first recorded landowners of what is now a portion of Pope Farm Conservancy. In 1854, John Elver purchased an 80-acre parcel (across from the present-day Town of Middleton Hall), that was subsequently owned by James Harloff (John Elver’s son-in-law) and Fritz Elver (his son). The Elvers would own this land until 1906.



After the talk, the group toured the area below the Blackhawk Ski Hill where Fritz Elver had his cabin, and worked to tame the land with his team of oxen. The tour continued on to view other historical points in the town, including the White Church on the corner of Pleasant View Road and Old Sauk Road.

The talk included the recorded history of ownership of the lands we know today as Pope Farm Conservancy, and how the settlers were influenced by the lay of the land as they arrived here from Mecklenburg, Germany. This presentation was video recorded by the Friends, and will become available to the public in the future.

Cold Weather Brings an End to Another 'Fruitful' Gardening Season at Pope Farm

Story and photos by Amy Rosebrough

The frost is literally on the pumpkins, and the gardens at Pope Farm are slowly being put to bed for the year. Thanks to help from Pope Farm Elementary and Forward Gardens, it was a successful growing season!

Forward Gardens provided the Friends with an informative soil analysis and donated badly-needed mineral additives. Forward also loaned us an energetic crew of volunteers to hand-till the gardens, allowing us to get a timely start on planting. And that planting was assisted by our very first 'crop' of students from Pope Farm Elementary! The students planted corn, squash,



sunflowers, and gourds in the 1000-Year Garden (pictured above), placing different varieties of corn on the different garden ridges to see how they grew.



Perhaps our most unexpected 'volunteers' were Henry and Henrietta, our resident Red-Tailed Hawks! They kept our volunteers ducking for cover through mid-Summer, while keeping the gardens rodent-free.

This summer, to commemorate the life of Genevieve Grignon--the first recorded owner of the land that would become Pope Farm-- the rotating garden was refashioned into a French Potager/Three Sisters garden. Spring's surprisingly high temperatures took an early toll on the French crops, which favor cooler weather. Despite this, the gardens managed to produce a decent crop of cabbage, lettuce, turnips, beets, cucumbers, leeks, carrots, and herbs. The flowers interplanted in the garden loved the warm

weather, bringing the season to a close with wonderful blooms. All the edible produce from both gardens was delivered to Forward Gardens for distribution to local food pantries.

Welcome New Board Member: Diane Smidt

This fall, the Friends welcomed a new Board Member, Diane Smidt, who is taking over for Martha Zydowsky as the Chair of the Programs Committee. Diane has been a Friend of Pope Farm Conservancy for around eight years. "Having grown up on a dairy farm and having been a 4th grade teacher, the conservancy is very close to my heart," Diane says. She enjoys all it offers: history, peacefulness, beauty and education. She likes volunteering with the Programs Committee because they can totally count on one another for ideas and follow through. She loves the search and the challenge for who, or what, will spike interest and educate the public.



Originally from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Diane came to teach in Madison some 37 years ago. She met her husband in Wisconsin and have two children, along with six grandchildren. Some of her interests include biking, hiking, baking, and travel. "I reached one of my goals this summer: visiting all of Wisconsin's 49 state parks," she adds. Wow! We are delighted to have Diane serving on the Board and leading the fun and creative friends on the Programs Team.

Property & Operations Update

Ravine Repaired after 2018 Flood Damage

Parts of the ravine collapsed in 2018 during a record rainfall (14"), and the damage needed to be repaired to prevent further erosion. The Town of Middleton, through a grant from Dane County, completed the repair last month. A huge thanks to all!

A more extensive report will be presented in the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy News Magazine in January. The ravine is very important to the biodiversity at the Conservancy.



Pictured Top Right: Construction on the ravine took place the week of Oct 18th. Photo by Janie Starzewski

Right Bottom Right: The repairs are now complete, but the trails along the eastern ridge of the ravine remain closed while the vegetation grows back.

Photo by Barbara Esser.



Blackhawk Prairie Damage

Photo by Jim Bolitho

We've received several reports of areas in the Blackhawk Prairie being trampled by visitors posing for photographs. Why is this a problem and how bad is it?

When the weather is nice in the fall, dozens of photographers are taking advantage of the incredible beauty of the Blackhawk Prairie almost every evening. Unfortunately, many of the photos are taken with people standing in the prairie itself. As a result, we're seeing several areas where the native grasses are being trampled down (pictured right). This will not only have a negative impact on the beautiful "look" the Blackhawk prairie has had in the past, but these trampled areas are also more susceptible to invasive weeds created by this disturbance.

The Blackhawk prairie is also home to various wildlife and nesting birds such as sedge wrens. The damage to the prairies has a negative impact on them, as well.

Photographers using the Conservancy is wonderful, and we kindly ask that **ALL visitors please stay on the trails and mowed paths**. Thank you for your cooperation!



The Badgers are Back!

The badgers are back at Pope Farm, searching for thirteen-lined ground squirrels. They were here in 2014, and after staying through the fall, they moved on...until now. The photo (right) was taken in September 2014 in the same area by the upper parking lot.

We are asking members of the Friends to help us.

If you see a badger at PFC:

- Keep your distance and do not approach it.
- Note the time and place that you see it.
- Take a photo, if possible.

Please send your information to info@popefarmconservancy.org.



Pictured Left: Badger holes were reported by the upper parking lot area in late October 2021.

Photo by Barbara Esser.

Prescribed Burns at PFC

Photo by Barbara Esser

On November 3rd, the Town of Middleton conducted a prescribed burn in the Wheatfield prairie (pictured right) at Pope Farm Conservancy.

Prescribed fire is an essential tool in preserving our native plant communities and the diverse species of animals, insects, birds, and amphibians they support.

For further details on the role of prescribed fire for maintaining prairies, oak savannas and oak woodlands, please visit <https://prescribedfire.org/learn/why-we-burn/> or <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/forestfire/prescribedfire/>



Harvest Time at PFC

All the crops at Pope Farm Conservancy have been harvested as of this writing, except for the corn. The alfalfa, winter wheat, oats, timothy grass, and soybeans have all been harvested. The corn will be harvested later in the fall and early Winter.

The winter wheat has been planted, and you can see it growing in several of the fields in the Conservancy. It will be harvested next summer.



“No Dogs Allowed in Conservancy” Sign Replaced

Photo: Barbara Esser

Earlier this year, we noticed that the "No dogs allowed in the Conservancy" sign had gone missing from the Park Information Board near the lower parking lot off Old Sauk Road.

The Friends replaced the sign this fall. A big 'Thanks' to FOPFC member Bob Wink who reinforced the new sign and attached it onto the sign board.



Volunteer Spotlight: Martha Zydowsky

The FOPFC would like to thank Martha Zydowsky for being an exceptional "Friend" and because she has truly made a difference at Pope Farm Conservancy!

Martha has volunteered for the Friends in many ways over the years. She first joined the Friends in 2014, after attending one of Mel Pope's annual tours. "It was on a beautiful summer evening in August when the conservancy was at its peak," she recalls. She instantly fell in love with the beauty and diversity of the prairies. Since then, she has been an integral part of the Programs Committee, serving as the committee's chairperson and a FOPFC Board Member from July 2017 to August 2021. She has helped organize the membership picnics and volunteer socials, scheduled and hosted FOPFC talks/tours and virtual presentations, written event promotions and recaps, captured event photos, and more!

Martha enjoys volunteering at Pope Farm because of the shared mission of the Friends, especially those on the Board and the Programs Committee, to maintain and enhance the conservancy as a special place to enjoy nature and learn about the history of the land. "I've learned so much about birds, prairie plants, geology, and archaeology; and during the pandemic, the conservancy has been a safe haven," she says.

Martha will continue to be an active member of the Friends and the Programs Committee when she's not snowbirding. She encourages other members who like to plan events and activities to think about becoming a member of the Programs Committee. "The new chairperson, Diane Smidt, and the Programs Committee members (Vina, Robby, Jean, and Sharon) are creative and fun," says Martha.

Upcoming FOPFC Meetings

Education Team Meeting – VIRTUAL

Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 23, 2021 (6:00 – 7:30 p.m.)

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

Discussion topics: We will be discussing current activities with the school district, and ideas on what we can do to improve the educational experience at Pope Farm Conservancy in 2022.

Programs Committee Meeting

Next Meeting: Dec 2021 - Exact date TBD

Discussion topics: The initial programming ideas are in! The next step is to firm up dates, times and speakers. We welcome all members interested in event planning to join this committee for a fun volunteer opportunity. Contact Diane Smidt for details.

Photo of the Month

A trip to Pope Farm Conservancy is rarely complete without seeing (or hearing) a Red-Tailed Hawk.

Photo by Jim Stewart



FOPFC Fundraiser

Show your support for the FOPFC by ordering a shirt, sweatshirt, tote bag, or mug from our online fundraiser! A portion of every sale goes directly to the Friends.

Order now through November 24th and receive your items by December 15th...just in time for the holidays!

Check out our Online Fundraiser here:

<https://www.bonfire.com/store/fopfc>

Please email the Friends at

info@popefarmconservancy.org if you have any questions regarding your order.



Celebrate #GivingTuesday on Nov. 30th

Join us in celebrating #GivingTuesday on November 30, 2021. GivingTuesday is a global generosity movement, typically held on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving. It's a day that encourages people to do good, whether it's a gift of your time, a donation, or the power of your voice in your local community. This year, consider donating to the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy on this day of giving. To make a Gift towards #GivingTuesday, go to: <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/donate/>



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!**