

NEWS FROM FRIENDS OF
POPE FARM
CONSERVANCY

Volume 7, Issue 1

PRESERVING THE LAND AND ITS STORIES



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy Needs Volunteers

BY MEL POPE



Getting back to normal is exciting. Who would have thought that seeing each other face-to-face would be such a joy! It looks like the summer 2022 will be filled with activities for ALL at the Conservancy. Many people have worked behind the scenes to make Pope Farm Conservancy a better place, and we would like to invite you to join in our efforts if you are so inclined. Of course, your membership and financial support are key, but if you would like to go above and beyond to help us, it would be much appreciated.

Here are some ways to get involved:

The Program Committee plans the adult educational programs throughout the year. This includes public tours, educational talks, and seasonal walks. Some of these programs take place at the Conservancy, and some are virtual presentations on Zoom. This year, the team is also planning a membership picnic in the fall. Additional volunteers are needed to help plan and promote these programs, coordinate speakers, and bring new ideas to the table. This a great opportunity to link the community at large to this 105-acre piece of natural beauty.

The Education Team works on educational outreach. On the front end, they research stories of the land and develop media formats (videos, magazines, pamphlets, the internet, etc.) to explain these stories to the public and students alike. They also work with elementary schools to assist with field trips and share in-depth knowledge of the conservancy. You could help in many ways, from developing lessons and creating hands-on, engaging experiences for students to leading tours and connecting kids to nature throughout the Conservancy.

The Restoration Team does prairie seed collection every year, and if you have not had the experience of collecting seed in the PFC prairies, it is something you should try. Seed collecting provides an opportunity to learn about the prairies' rich history and how to identify some of the plants. The seeds are then used to enhance natural areas at PFC. The Restoration Team also coordinates the monarch tagging efforts at the conservancy. Both activities are great ways to spend a few hours in nature.

The PR Team is responsible for putting together the monthly e-news updates, producing the beautiful news magazines, promoting events, and updating social media. Volunteers are needed to help write content and stories for these wonderful publications. There are so many interesting stories at the Conservancy, and if you like to write, there is much to write about! We currently rely on the same people month after month, and we need your help. Even if it is contributing an article once or twice a year.

Photography is also an important part of our messaging. The need for photographs sporadically pops up during the year, so we are looking for several photographers to be "on call" for various photo assignments related to FOPFC projects and events, as well as seasonal happenings at the Conservancy. This is an amazing opportunity for those who are passionate about conservation and want to practice their photography skills while enjoying time in nature.

The FOPFC Board needs additional members, as well. We are looking for people who share our enthusiasm for Pope Farm Conservancy and are committed to its preservation and protection as an educational and community asset. We have several areas where we could certainly use your expertise: coordinating volunteers, strategic planning, fundraising, grant writing, communications, and operations.

If you are interested in helping out or would like to know more about any of these opportunities, please send an email to info@popefarmconservancy.org. Volunteering with the Friends is an excellent way to "give back" to your community.

MEL POPE

Newsletter Team

Janie Starzewski
Graphic Design by: Linda Napiwocki,
Purple Moon Design

Photo Credits

First Lutheran Church, Middleton Cross-Plains Area School District, Middleton Historical Society, Aaron Leist, Lauren McClone Design, Mike McDowell, Rona Neri, The Schwenn Family, Jack Sherman, Janie Starzewski, Wisconsin Historical Society.

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Curt Caslavka—Prairie Restoration Team
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Janie Starzewski—Public Relations
Bob Wink—Corporate Fundraising
Doug Piper—Education Team

Administrative Team

Dione Tyler—Administrative Advisor
Jerry McAdow—Counsel Advisor

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
Middleton, WI 53562

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.



THE UNIQUE AMPHITHEATERS

Between 2004 and 2014, six amphitheaters were donated to the Town of Middleton, each representing different peoples who lived on the land and a particular story of the land itself.



2022 EVENTS SCHEDULE

All FOPFC programs are free and open to the public. Be sure to check our website for the latest program news and updates: www.popefarmconservancy.org/events



HISTORIC LAND—THE SCHENK AND SCHWENN FARM

The Schencks and Schwenns have a long history in the town of Middleton. From 1866 until 1914, Rev. Carl Schenck and his wife Christine and their heirs farmed the 80 acres that are now the eastern part of the Pope Farm Conservancy.



THE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS

If there's one bird you're almost guaranteed to see when you visit Pope Farm in the spring and summer, it's the brash, confident Red-Winged Blackbird.

AND JUST IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING...

If you are not familiar with this publication, please accept with our compliments the Spring 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

THE UNIQUE AMPHITHEATERS AT THE POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

BY MEL POPE

The mission of Pope Farm Conservancy is to serve as an educational Conservancy, specifically education for elementary school students. This requires carefully integrating conservation efforts with written history, lectures for the public, and curricula for the classroom.

Outdoor classrooms where learners can sit, talk, and study the unique features offered by the Conservancy are key to this mission. Not wanting to interrupt the landscape with buildings and structures, Wayne Pauley, naturalist for Dane County Parks, shared the idea of large stone amphitheaters that could serve as benches

and learning centers across the Conservancy.

Between 2004 and 2014, six amphitheaters were donated to the Town of Middleton, each representing different peoples who lived on the land and a particular story of the land itself.

Each amphitheater accommodates 30 fourth-grade students. They are built out of Aspen blocks built into the landscape to be visually unobtrusive. To date, hundreds of grade school classes, public lectures, and special events have been presented at the Conservancy's amphitheaters.



Native American Amphitheater

The Native American amphitheater overlooks Lake Mendota and the ancient Native American trail that ran from the Northwest portion of Lake Mendota toward Blue Mounds. It sits in the picnic area closest to the parking lot and is handicapped accessible. It features seven interpretive signs, some of which show the history of the Native American peoples from the Ice Age to the Ho Chunk. This Amphitheater is heavily used for classes and lectures. This amphitheater was donated by the Rotary Club of Madison West Towne-Middleton soon after the Conservancy's grand opening. The graphics on the interpretive signs were donated by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

HEATERS

Geology Amphitheater

The Geology amphitheater is the most used amphitheater at Pope Farm Conservancy. It sits in the middle of the picnic area off the upper parking lot and overlooks Lake Mendota, the Capitol, and Black Earth Creek Valley.

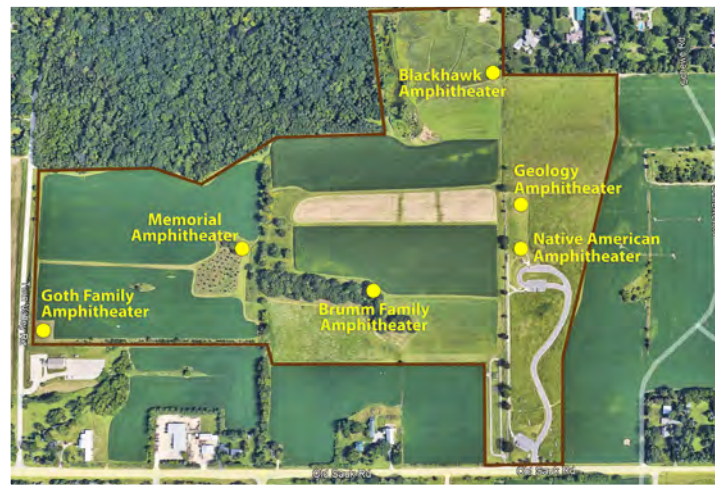
Art Pope believed this view to be the prettiest view in Dane County, and it was one of the reasons he wanted this property protected. The amphitheater features five geology signs that describe the glacier and how it formed the land we call Pope Farm Conservancy. It is heavily used by the school district and is the educational center for many lectures to the public. It was donated in honor of Art and Betty Pope by their children and grandchildren. The graphics for the interpretive signs were donated by the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey.



The stones blend with the landscape, as shown in the Geology Amphitheater above

Photos: Janie Starzewski

The map below shows the locations of all the Amphitheaters in Pope Farm Conservancy.



Blackhawk Amphitheater

The Blackhawk amphitheater has a stunning view of the Black Earth Creek Valley. It is an unusual spot because if you walk 50 yards in any direction (within the Conservancy), you can't see the full view of the valley. For Vivian Pope, the view to the west toward her native Montana was her favorite. The sweeping view of the Black Earth Creek Valley is framed by the short grass prairie that changes colors throughout the growing season. It was built so when you sat on the amphitheater, you would be sitting in a "room of grass" as you look out over the valley. Vivian's husband (Art), children, and grandchildren donated this amphitheater in her memory. An interpretive sign about the Black Earth Creek Valley during the glacial periods stands by this location.



The Brumm Family Amphitheater

The Brumm Amphitheater is located on the highest point at Pope Farm Conservancy. It features a spectacular 360-degree view of Lake Mendota, the Capitol, Black Earth Creek Valley, and the Terminal Moraine. This amphitheater was donated by the Elmer Brumm family whose ancestors owned Pope Farm from 1908—959. The Brumm family called the Burr Oaks that sit by the site the “little woods.” From this location, you can clearly see the Pope Farm Homestead which the Brumm family originally built in 1910.



The Goth Family Amphitheater

This amphitheater sits on the top of the far Western edge of the Conservancy and offers a different view towards the Black Earth Creek Valley and developments to the South. Below this site (to the East), is a German cabin site that was inhabited by Joachim Goth and his family from 1867 to 1880. In 2012, the Goth family donated this amphitheater in memory of the Goth family who once lived there. This amphitheater is used by many bikers and people who walk Twin Valley Road as they stop to enjoy the views.



The Memorial Amphitheater

Over the years, dozens of people had offered to build memorial benches in the Conservancy. Rather than building many individual tribute benches, the solution was to build one memorial amphitheater for all who have gone before us. The Memorial Amphitheater was donated in 2014 by Christine Williams upon the death of a dear friend. A beautiful poem that Christine wrote is inscribed on a plaque at the site to pay tribute to the memories of those who have passed on.

The Memorial Amphitheater sits in a beautiful little valley in the center of the Conservancy. It looks East toward a nearby hillside of flowers among a stand of native Burr oak trees.

You can independently visit these sites to soak in the sights and sounds of prairies, crops, and wildlife found across the Conservancy. Or you can attend one of our public lectures that take place at the amphitheaters each season. □

*You visit us in summer when flowers are in bloom,
Upon the rays of sunshine, a star-lit night in June.*

*In the early hush of morning,
you come without a sound,
Upon the blaze of sunset your memory
is still found.*

*We spot you in spring's garden,
your scent still fills the air,
Just like a treasured flower, a sunflower,
so ever fair.*

*When winds are softly blowing
across the brilliant sky,
Within the rolling prairies,
where bees and nature lie.*

*We see you in the treetops
as fall's harvest comes to be
In shadows, you do linger, a soul renewed and free.
But often, we still see you upon the winter glow,
We long to walk beside you,
and miss you ever so.*

—Poem by Christine Williams—



The Stories of the Land

At different points throughout the Conservancy, you will find signs containing a QR code. Be sure to scan the code to watch our video series on the stories of the land, and the human history of Pope Farm that inspired each amphitheater! Also available on our website: <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/plan-your-visit/interactive-tours/>



Schenck-Schwenn Farm 1914 on Old Sauk Road built by Carl Schenck and his descendants

HISTORIC LAND

AND POPE FARM CONSERVANCY



Henriette Schenck Schwenn's home in 1903 still stands on Old Sauk Road by the Pope Farm School.

BY SANDY SCHWENN RENO AND LISA SCHUETZ.

The Schencks and Schwenns have a long history in the town of Middleton.

From 1866 until 1914, Rev. Carl Schenck and his wife Christine and their heirs farmed the 80 acres that are now the eastern part of the Pope Farm Conservancy. The home built by their daughter, Henrietta, and her husband, Charles Schwenn, remains on Old Sauk Road today. The Pope Farm Elementary School is located behind the home on what was once their farmland.

In 1879, Rev. Carl Schenck was interviewed about his farm on Old Sauk Road in the Town of Middleton. He is

quoted as saying, "It has a commanding view of Lake Mendota and the Capitol." What Reverend Schenck was referring to was what we know today as the picnic area on the hilltop at Pope Farm Conservancy.

Like many in Wisconsin, the Schencks were German immigrants who grew up in a farming community. Carl was born on October 3, 1823 in Priborn, Germany, a small village northwest of Berlin in the state of Mecklenberg Vorpommern. When Carl was ten, his father died, so the young family moved to the village of Penzlin to be

closer to the extended Schenck family. Before adulthood, Carl had already learned about the fragility of life and the meaning of responsibility and service to others.

Carl was an excellent student and trained as a teacher. He taught in the small village of Tarnow under the tutelage of instructor August Granzow. He eventually married the instructor's daughter, Christine. Carl continued his education in theology and was eventually ordained as a Lutheran minister.

On April 15, 1854, when Carl was



Rev. Carl Schenck
1823-1883

30 and Christine was 26, they boarded the Bark Elbe sailing ship in Hamburg and emigrated to America. No doubt, Carl served as the sailing ship's pastor and teacher.

Once in America, Carl purchased 80 acres of land in the Town of Berry atop of a high hill with vistas of what were then heavily wooded valleys and newly broken farmland. As a pastor, friend and neighbor, Rev. Schenck shared in the joys and sorrows of the early German immigrants. Like so many other new immigrants, Rev. Schenck lost

many loved ones, including children, not only in Germany but also in America. Of the close friends who crossed the ocean with Carl and his wife, five perished from cholera. Rev. Schenck and his wife would have three sons and seven daughters in America in addition to their German born Henriette but would also experience the deaths of two of their American daughters due to childhood illnesses.

By 1861, Carl had purchased 40 acres of land on Springfield Hill in the Town of Roxbury, at a crossroads for immigrants coming into northwestern Dane County. Then in 1859, Rev. Carl Schenck was called to pastor First Lutheran Church in the Town of Middleton. At that time, he was already serving two churches. As a "circuit" preacher, Rev. Schenck traveled by horseback, wagon, or buggy to his congregations and officiated at weddings which were most often celebrated in the homes of the immigrants. When he became the first pastor of First German Lutheran Church, he also accepted responsibility for providing advanced instruction and parochial school classes for German Lutheran immigrant students who lived in the Town of Middleton and the surrounding areas. He initially conducted church services, confirmation classes and academic

instruction in the original log church.

In 1865, Carl and Christine Schenck purchased an 80-acre farm on Old Sauk. In addition to his pastoral duties, Carl and his family farmed this land. The fact that Rev. Schenck chose to work the farm when he had so many other duties as a pastor and teacher reveals his deep connection to the land.

Carl was undoubtedly one of the most educated persons in Dane County. He was dedicated to excellence in education and provided his students in Mecklenburg and in America with a superb education. It is ironic that Pope Farm Elementary School was built in 2020 and sits on the property that Rev. Schenck once farmed. The Pope Farm School embraces the history of the land and the people that lived on this land. The school is a fitting tribute to Rev. Schenck, and his dedication to his students.

In 1866, Carl oversaw the building of a new church on the corner of Pleasant View and Old Sauk Roads. First Lutheran Church is on the National Registry of Historical Places. Carl's portrait hangs prominently in the vestibule of First Lutheran Church. His lingering presence may be felt at weddings, baptisms, funerals, or the annual fall services. The pulpit where Rev. Carl Schenck preached his sermons



Henriette Schenck Schwenn and her family in front of the Stone House on Old Sauk Road

Location of the original Schenck Homestead today



**First German Lutheran Church
Log Chapel on Pleasant View Road**



Oldest known photo of the First Lutheran Church in Middleton

in German has been lowered but still towers above the pews below. Carl's distinctive gravestone with a Bible atop welcomes visitors to the cemetery where so many of the early German immigrants in the town of Middleton and their direct descendants are buried.

Two years after Carl Schenck's death in 1883, his eldest daughter Henrietta and her husband Charles Schwenn, bought the Schenck farm and moved into the stone house. Charles Schwenn farmed the land with his eldest son, Charles A.J. Schwenn until 1911. A photo of the stone house on the eastern portion of the Conservancy land shows Henrietta and Charles with six of their eight children surrounding them.

In 1901, Henrietta and Charles Schwenn tore down the stone house and built the two-story house that still stands on Old Sauk Road with the Pope Farm School behind it, a reminder of

the 50+ years the Schenck-Schwenn family lived on and farmed the land.

As a visitor to the Pope Farm Conservancy, you can now hike on the land that Carl and his family once farmed. You can see the prominent stone wall that contains rocks they added each spring when they tilled the soil, and the house that Henriette and her husband Charles T. Schwenn built on the land. Behind the house is the new Pope Farm School that embodies Carl's dream to offer all children a superior education. As you climb the hill to the picnic area in the Pope Farm Conservancy, you stand on what was once part of Rev. Schenck's farmland. You might even imagine Rev. Schenck standing beside you and feel the satisfaction Rev. Schenck experienced knowing that many of the aspirations he shared with other early German immigrant settlers were realized. □



**First Lutheran Church on the corner
of Old Sauk Road and Pleasant View
Road, present day**

2022 EVENTS POPE FARM CONSERVANCY CALENDAR

BY JANIE STARZEWSKI



APRIL

Forward Garden Tour Saturday, April 9th, 2022 at 1:00 pm Forward Garden

7492 West Old Sauk Road, Middleton, WI 53562

Speaker: Matt Lechmaier, Farm Manager

Are you curious about the garden plots taking root at the Pope Farm Homestead? This is a food pantry garden, called Forward Garden. It's part of a network of gardens organized by the Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens (MAFPG), which provides fresh, first-choice vegetables to the Dane County emergency food system. We invite you to join us for a tour of Forward Garden with farm manager, Matt Lechmaier. Matt will provide a brief overview of the garden's first two growing seasons, and share plans for the upcoming year, including volunteer opportunities, production plans, and new outlets they are planning to serve.



MAY

Pope Farm Elementary School Tour Thursday, May 26th, 2022 at 7:00—7:45 pm Pope Farm Elementary School, 816 Schewe Rd, Verona, WI 53593

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. 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 science. 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.



Photo: Lauren McClone Design

JUNE

Spring Migration Birding Tour Saturday, June 11th, 2022, at 7:30 am Pope Farm Conservancy, 7440 West Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI 53593 (Meet in the LOWER parking lot)

Speaker: Mike McDowell, Nature Photographer and Birding Expert

Calling all birders and bird enthusiasts! Join us for an exciting early morning adventure through Pope Farm Conservancy with birding expert Mike McDowell. We typically see and hear dozens of different bird species, including bluebirds, indigo buntings, eastern wood-pewees, wild turkeys, and great crested flycatchers. This is a great way to start the day and meet other local birders. You might even see a few birds to add to your life list! Wear good walking shoes and dress for the weather. Don't forget to bring your binoculars and camera, too. This tour is free and open to the public. No registration required.



Photo: Rona Neri

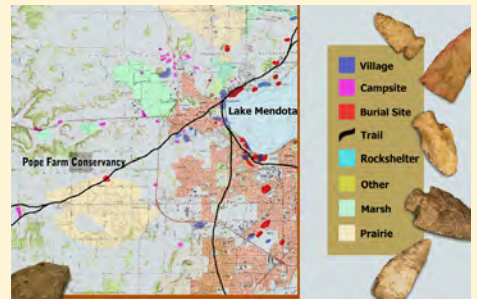


JULY

History of the Land Talk with Mel Pope Thursday, July 28th, 2022 at 7:00 pm Pope Farm Conservancy, 7440 West Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI 53593 (Meet at the TOP of the hill)

Speaker: Mel Pope, FOPFC Chair

Join Mel Pope for a talk about Pope Farm Conservancy. Learn about the purpose of the conservancy, its features, and the history of the land. Mel will talk about the conservancy's importance as a natural area for people to connect with the land and as a protected habitat for birds and wildlife. This tour is free and open to the public. No registration required. We will meet at the TOP of the hill.



AUGUST

Archeology Tour with Amy Rosebrough Tuesday, August 9th, 2022, at 6:00 pm Pope Farm Conservancy, 7440 West Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI 53593 (Meet in the LOWER parking lot)

Speaker: Dr. Amy Rosebrough, Archaeologist in the Division of Historic Preservation and Public History at the Wisconsin Historical Society

Join Wisconsin Historical Society archaeologist Amy L. Rosebrough for a walking tour of the archeology and history of Pope Farm Conservancy. Scenes from many episodes of Wisconsin's history have played out at Pope Farm, both uplifting and tragic, leaving traces of forgotten lives behind. This tour is free, family-friendly, and open to the public. We will be doing some up-hill walking over moderate terrain, so wear good walking shoes. We will meet in the lower parking lot near the Old Sauk Road entrance.



Photo: City of Middleton

SEPTEMBER

Member Appreciation Party
Thursday, September 1st, 2022
4:00—8:00 pm

Middleton's Lakeview Park,
6300 Mendota Ave, Middleton, WI 53562

Host: FOPFC's Programs Committee

To All FOPFC Members, Volunteers, and Supporters: The Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy invite you to join us for a picnic at Lakeview Park in Middleton to celebrate your contributions to the conservancy. Without your volunteer work and financial support, our programs and activities throughout the year wouldn't be possible. We greatly appreciate everything you do! Come and meet board members and committee members and other volunteers. We'll share information on future plans and volunteer opportunities. We'll provide food and non-alcoholic beverages. You may bring your own beer or wine if it's in a non-breakable container. We recommend bringing lawn chairs and your own sunscreen.



Monarch Butterfly Tagging Project
September 2022 (Exact dates TBD)
Pope Farm Conservancy, 7440 West Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI 53593
(Meet in the LOWER parking lot)

Pope Farm Conservancy is a great place to witness the marvel of the monarch butterfly migration. Due to the large congregation of monarchs at the conservancy each fall, it has become a popular area where monarchs are both observed and studied. We invite you to participate in this citizen science project to help search for, capture, tag, and release migrating monarchs. Recoveries of tagged monarchs help scientists determine the butterflies' migratory route; and perhaps yield clues as to why the monarch populations are in decline. No experience necessary. Visit our website for exact dates and registration details. Contact Curt Caslavka at curt@popefarmconservancy.org for more information.

Fall Migration Birding Walk
Saturday, September 10th, 2022, at 7:30 am
Pope Farm Conservancy, 7440 West Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI 53593 (Meet in the LOWER parking lot)

Speaker: Mike McDowell, Birding Expert and Nature Photographer

Join birding expert Mike McDowell on a hike through Pope Farm Conservancy to observe the behavior of birds who are preparing for or already in the process of migrating south. Mike will share tips and techniques for identifying and observing these birds who stop here for much needed food and rest during their long journey. Pope Farm Conservancy supports a rich array of ecosystems in a relatively small area, and we are likely to see and hear many different bird species both in the sky and in the habitat. Don't forget to bring binoculars, wear comfortable walking shoes, and dress for the weather. This program is free and open to the public. No registration required.



Prairie Seed Collection
September – October 2022
(Exact dates TBD)

Pope Farm Conservancy, 7440 West Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI 53593
(Meet in the LOWER parking lot)

The FOPFC Restoration Team is looking for volunteers to help collect prairie plant seeds this fall, in efforts to increase the diversity of prairie plant species at Pope Farm Conservancy and to improve the overall quality of our prairies. Seed collection is easy to do, and it's an enjoyable way to spend a couple hours in nature. We will have team leaders on hand to help you. All sessions are open to the public. Groups are welcome, too. Exact dates and times will be announced in late August. Be sure to check our website for updates.



OCTOBER

"The Prairie Seed"— A Fall Prairie Walking Tour

Saturday, October 1st, 2022, at 9:30—10:30 am
Pope Farm Conservancy, 7440 West Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI 53593
(Meet in the LOWER parking lot)

Speaker: Jeff Steele, Wild Ones Madison

Join the Madison Chapter of the Wild Ones on this one-hour guided tour of Pope Farm Conservancy's restored prairies. October is great time to experience the prairie in its final beauty. This pleasant walk will serve as an introduction to identifying seed-bearing prairie plants. Those that attend will also learn from restoration experts how to properly collect and store seeds from various species. This program is free and open to the public. No registration required.



Fall Nature Photography Workshop
Saturday, October 22nd, 2022, at 8:00 am
Pope Farm Conservancy, 7440 West Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI 53593
(Meet in the LOWER parking lot)

Presenters: Photo Midwest

Capture the beauty of autumn on a "photo walk" at Pope Farm Conservancy on Saturday, October 22nd from 8 am to 11 am. This program is free and open to the public and will be led by photographers from PhotoMidwest. It's a great opportunity to practice your photography skills, talk about nature, learn, and socialize. Don't forget to bring along your camera, tablet and/or your cellphone. All ages and skill levels are welcome! This program is free and open to the public. No registration required.

All FOPFC programs are free and open to the public. Be sure to check our website for the latest program news and updates:
www.popefarmconservancy.org/events

COVID-19 Safety Guidelines

The health and safety of our program participants and speakers is a top priority. For all FOPFC in-person activities, we will be implementing safety measures that align with the latest federal, state, and local guidelines. As this situation is continually changing, please check our website for the latest safety measures and program updates.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS

IN THE POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

BY RONA NERI

If there's one bird you're almost guaranteed to see when you visit Pope Farm in the spring and summer, it's the brash, confident Red-Winged Blackbird. Look for the glossy black males perched on sturdy stalks. Listen as they sing their melodic bold songs establishing their territory and flashing their namesake red patches on their wings.

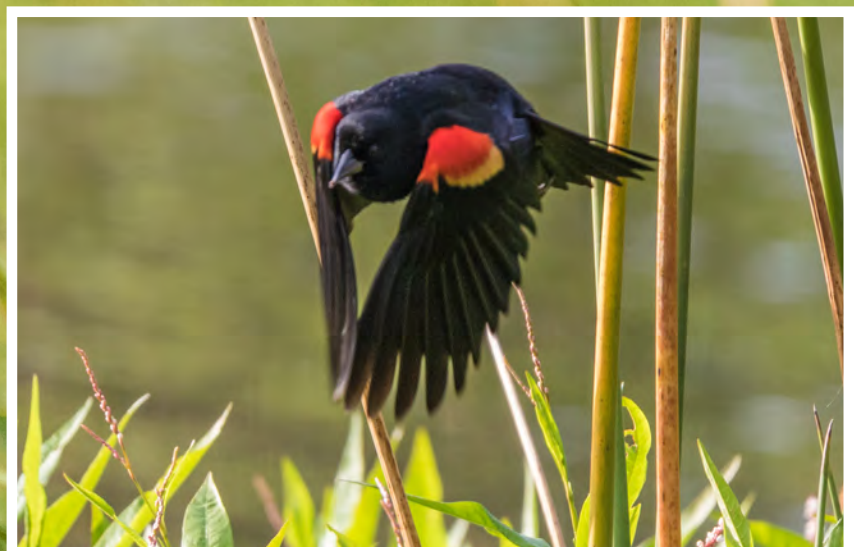
During breeding season, you'll see the males here in the open fields and prairies of the Conservancy. Their many mates are probably hidden nearby and you may see them if you look lower in the grass. The females look quite different—sporting plain streaky brown colors that help them to

blend in with the grasses and reeds where they nest and forage. This difference in appearance is called “sexual dimorphism” and is a protective feature that can be found in many bird species.

Up to ten female red wings may nest near each other under one male's territory & protection, but they may also mate with other neighboring males. As a result, a nest may contain eggs from more than one father. The females make their nests low to the ground in thick grasses or reeds—carefully weaving a platform among several stalks and then forming a deep cup of grass and leaves on the sturdy base. The mother lays 3-5 pale bluish green spotted eggs and

incubates them by herself for 11-12 days. There's safety in numbers and nesting close to one another keeps the females and young safer from the many predators that threaten them.

Meanwhile, the noisy male stands on the lookout and lets everyone know he's the king of his territory with his brassy call —“conk-a-ree”. Males use their coloration for different purposes. His scarlet wing patches are called “epaulets” and they are very important for protection and survival. In studies in which some epaulets were dyed black, 64% of the males with darkened wings lost their territories. When defending their territory, they display their



epaulets to make them appear as large and as bright as possible. When encroaching on another male's territory, they hide the red with black feathers in order to seem less threatening. When two males next to each other display their epaulets, they are probably on either side of a boundary between territories. During breeding season, males will aggressively defend against anything they perceive as a danger. They are known for attacking much larger birds like crows, herons or cranes, sometimes even hitching a ride on another bird's back as if to say, "back off!"

Young blackbirds look much like their mothers—brown and inconspicuous. Even young males take several months to develop their colors. Their bodies become more solid black with larger, brighter epaulets as they age.

When the cool air arrives in September or October, Red Wings prepare to move. As short-distance migrants, they don't have to travel far—just to the southern states—but they still make an impression as they travel. They form huge mixed flocks with starlings, grackles and cowbirds that sometimes number in the thousands or even millions! In fall you may see these remarkable flocks moving like one fluttering dark cloud in the sky as

they dodge predators like hawks or owls. These immense flocks in movement are called "murmurations" and are mesmerizing to observe.

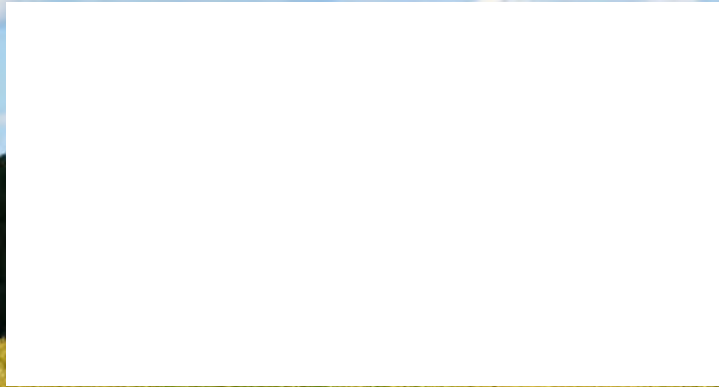
When the snow melts, male Red Wings are among our earliest migrants to return home. They come a couple weeks ahead of the females to set up the best territories to attract healthy mates. The songs they sing as they wait for the females are a welcome signal that spring has finally arrived. □



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