

June 2023 News Update

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It feels like we've jumped right into summer with these hot, dry days lately. Take advantage of the cooler temperatures in the mornings and evenings to check out the prairies at Pope Farm Conservancy. The springtime blooms are simply delightful.

"Some old-fashioned things like fresh air and sunshine are hard to beat."
— Laura Ingalls Wilder

Upcoming Programs

Blooms of the Prairie Walk

Sunday, July 16th, 2023 (10AM)



Join the Madison Chapter of the Wild Ones on this one-hour guided tour of Pope Farm Conservancy's restored prairies. July is a great time to experience the prairie at peak bloom! This pleasant walk will serve as an introduction to identifying the 100+ species of flowering prairie plants present. Those who attend can learn from restoration experts how to incorporate native plants into their home landscaping.

All ages are welcome. Wear good walking shoes and dress for the weather. Don't forget to bring your binoculars and camera, too.

Program Details:

- **Date/Time:** Sunday, July 16, 2023 (10AM)
- **Location:** Pope Farm Conservancy - Meet in the lower parking lot
- **Address:** 7440 Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI 53593
- **Cost:** Free and open to the public. No registration required. All ages welcome.
- **Event Website:** <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/events/prairie-walk/>

Pope Farm Conservancy Archaeology Tour

Saturday, August 5th, 2023 (10AM)



Join Wisconsin Historical Society archaeologist Dr. Amy 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. No registration required.

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- **Cost:** Free and open to the public. No registration required. All ages welcome.
- **Event Website:** <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/events/archaeology-tour/>

Recap of March Programs

Nest Box Trail Walk at Pope Farm Conservancy – May 13th

Story by Jean Kollasch; Photos Robby Sonzogni



On May 13th, Curt Caslavka and Pat Ready led a tour at Pope Farm Conservancy to 3 bluebird boxes located in the lower end of the conservancy where many interesting facts were shared. In pointing out that birds compete for the boxes, Pat revealed that often the box is claimed by a house sparrow or other smaller birds. House sparrows can be very aggressive when they have young in the box. If you get too close, the sparrow can fly out and nearly “part your hair”.



Above: Pat Ready gives us a tour inside this bluebird nest box.

Curt and Arlys Caslavka installed the bluebird boxes in 2008. They have recorded the number of bluebird eggs and number of birds fledged, and they have recorded 1,400 birds that have fledged from those boxes, and about ½ were bluebirds, and ½ were tree swallows. In doing this, they have discovered interesting

and sometimes surprising things. Bluebirds keep a very tidy nest. Sparrows are very messy housekeepers. From this, you can tell who has claimed the box even when a bird is not present. This year an egg from another bird species was found amongst bluebird eggs in a box. The question is - will the bluebirds raise this foreign chick, or will this foreign chick wreak havoc on the bluebird family? If you see Pat, ask him what he discovered for this answer.



Above: Hatchling inside the nesting box waiting to be fed.

Of the boxes viewed during the tour, only one had a bluebird nest in which 3 eggs had been laid. One egg had hatched and a hatchling was inside the box waiting to be fed. Our extreme cold spring had prevented the bluebirds from keeping all the eggs warm. Those two other eggs will not hatch as a result. This is not unusual. Pat noted that the box entrance facing away from the prevailing winds assists birds in staying warm. As the excited tour attendees looked into the box with the young bluebird, mom and dad bluebird attentively flew back and forth and watched from nearby high tree branches. As the crowd walked away, the parents immediately came to check the nest. Such attentive parents. The male's brilliant blue coloring and the duller coloring of the female were both a joy to behold. Watch for their blue flash when you visit the conservancy.

Thanks to everyone who attended the event! And a special thanks to our presenters, Pat and Curt, for sharing their knowledge with us.

News From the Friends



Above: The new interpretive signage at the top of the hill

You might notice a difference at Pope Farm Conservancy this summer. Most of the signs you see are new. The Friends replaced most of the trail markers, interpretive and regulatory signage. We paid approximately \$6,000 for these replacements and provided the labor to install them. This enhances the trails and the educational experience for the Conservancy visitor for years to come.

In addition, 26 QR code labels have been added to the interpretive signs. This will give the option for the public to view 5-minute educational videos that correspond to the subject displayed on the interpretive sign. It is now possible to spend an entire day walking the Conservancy learning about the stories of the land.



Above: The new regulatory signs (left) and trail markers (right).

Upcoming FOPFC Meetings

Education Team Meeting – VIRTUAL

Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, July 18th, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

Location: We will meet online via Zoom. Email Doug Piper (dlpiper0413@gmail.com) to get the Zoom meeting link.

Topics: We will finalize the new walking tour pamphlets with QR labels, and work on strategy for promoting our video series.

Photo Contest 2023

You can now submit your entries for our 2023 Nature Photography Contest! This year's themes are spring and summer: Landscape; and Prairie Plants. The contest is open to amateur photographers of all ages who are members of the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy (FOPFC).

We are looking forward to seeing all the entries! The deadline to submit photos is July 15, 2023.

Visit our website for more information:

<https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/events/nature-photography-contest/>

Photo of the Month



The prairies are beginning their spring show at the conservancy. Look for the white Baptisia (false indigo) amongst the bright Golden Alexander at the top of the hill.

Photo by Janie Starzewski

Reminders

Renew Your Membership

Just a reminder...you can now renew your membership online at <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/membership>, or you can renew by mail. Please send a check (Payable to FOPFC) 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 send an email to info@popefarmconservancy.org.

Volunteer Opportunities

- The **PR/Communications Team** needs help writing stories and short articles for our publications. We are also looking for photo submissions for the "Photo of the Month" feature. If interested, please email us at info@popefarmconservancy.org.
- The **Programs Committee** is currently planning events and educational talks for 2023. If you would like to get involved or share your ideas for programs offered at the conservancy, please contact Diane Smidt (diane.smidt@gmail.com) or come to the Programs Committee meeting on April 14th.

If there's another activity you'd like to help with, please fill out the Volunteer Interests Form on our website: <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/volunteer/>

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!**

