



Our Mission
 To restore, preserve and promote the value of conservancy lands and other habitats in the Pheasant Branch watershed for today and tomorrow.

St. Patrick's Day Surprise! *Generosity Helps Reduce Highland Way Project Debt*

St. Patrick's Day proved lucky for the Friends. A fundraising dinner held on the evening of March 17, highlighted by a dramatic gift by Dan Erdman at the end of the evening, significantly reduced the debt that the Friends incurred to purchase the Highland Way property.



Friends of Pheasant Branch members and supporters enjoyed a fine meal, Irish music, and a few fundraising surprises at the Blackhawk Country Club.

The Friends borrowed \$180,000 to acquire the land (now called The John C. Bock Urban Forest) last January. The loan was necessary to bridge the gap between the \$3 million purchase price and the \$2,820,000 in private and governmental gifts that the Friends had managed to raise. As St.

Patrick's Day approached, the Friends' steady fundraising efforts reduced the \$180,000 debt to \$102,750.

Guests at the dinner, held at Blackhawk Country Club, were asked to contribute \$100 each. All contributions reduced the debt, because three sponsors paid for the food and other expenses: Schreiber/Anderson

Associates, Stafford Rosenbaum LLP, and Suby Von Haden & Associates SC.

Guests were treated to Irish music played by Paul Kaarakka and David

... See *Generosity*, p. 2

Friends & Neighbors Celebration Enjoy and Explore the Conservancy May 6th



Please join us on Sunday, May 6, for our annual Friends & Neighbors Celebration. You'll find family-friendly activities from 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm at the Orchid Heights Park.

Join naturalist, humorist, and educator David Stokes (left) for stories, songs, and live animal experiences. Other activities include: Bird Hikes, Flying Crane Qigong (Chinese exercises), Nature Exhibits, Stewardship Activities, Wildlife Displays, and Information on the John C. Bock Urban Forest project.

This event is sponsored by the Friends of Pheasant Branch, with generous support from Monsanto Fund and the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board

May 2007

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A Note From the Board President



Jim O'Brien

Dear Friends:

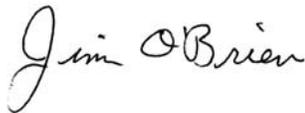
Like everyone at the St. Patrick's Day fundraiser, I was taken aback when Dan Erdman made a dramatic announcement. He would match whatever donations the guests assembled for dinner contributed to the Highland Way debt retirement effort. Dan's generosity set an example for people to dig deeper, and the result of that cooperative endeavor is immensely satisfying. We thank Dan for his enthusiastic support of the Friends throughout this long campaign.

Our annual January dinner, too, had its share of revelations. The turnover in the Board's membership was larger than usual, and the assembled group was asked to endorse the nomination of seven new members. They are Ben Grawe, Susan Gruber, Paul Helgeson, Eric (Rick) Kurz, Rod Miller, Lou Reilly, and Julia Riley. The departing members, all of whom deserve plaudits for their service, are Emil Haney, Vern Howard, Trudy Laffer, Lou Maher, Teague Prichard, Gail Shea, and Dan Stapay. The newsletter, fundraising and memberships, the selection of the John H. Bock Memorial Stone, and planning for the Highland Way kiosk were only the more obvious activities pursued by various members of this group.

At our first meeting after the annual dinner, the Board reappointed the President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Lou Reilly agreed to succeed Emil Haney as Vice-President. Julia Riley offered to take over from Trudy Laffer as the Newsletter Editor. At our most recent meeting, which was held in March, we began to sort out the assignments that the new members will take on as part of our annual Action Plan. I will follow up on this subject in the next newsletter or two.

I hope that readers will keep in mind the article in the last newsletter entitled "Lost and Found on the Trail." The trash that lies about the Conservancy often gets picked up by responsible-minded people. Let's look forward to a day when restoration and preservation can be appreciated free of this distraction.

Sincerely,



Jim O'Brien, President

Friends of Pheasant Branch Officers

Board Members

Jim O'Brien

Andrea Gargas

Hagen Hedfield

Bill Hoeksema

Tom Bernthal

Janet Kane

Sally Kefer

Brian Butler

Ben Grawe

Susan Gruber

Paul Helgeson

Rick Kurz

Rod Miller

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Send Newsletter Ideas to:

office@pheasantbranch.org

Visit us on the Web at:

www.pheasantbranch.org

St. Patrick's Day Generosity . . .

continued from p. 1 . . .

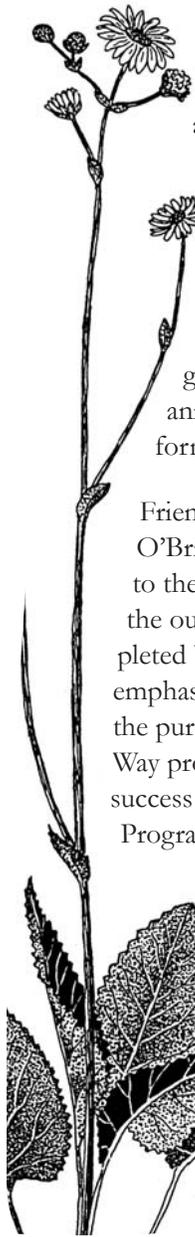
Fallow, and a talk by Tia Nelson, who managed both a serious message and Irish drollery. Sally Kefer described plans for the future of the land. Paul Houseman of the Madison Community Foundation created excitement with an announcement of three gifts he had obtained shortly before the dinner, totaling about \$15,000.

But the biggest and most gratifying surprise was Dan Erdman's announcement, at the end of the evening, that he

would match donations contributed at the dinner.

Counting all contributions, including the proceeds of a silent auction held at the dinner, the event raised \$82,360, reducing the debt from \$102,750 to \$20,390. The Friends will be pursuing the elimination of this amount with their usual determination.

Friends Celebrate Annual Meeting



The Friends of Pheasant Branch Annual Meeting was held on January 18, 2007, at the Hilton Garden Inn in Middleton. This meeting, attended by 79 members and guests, marked the 12th anniversary of the Friends' formation.

Friends' President, Jim O'Brien, welcomed attendees to the meeting and reviewed the outstanding year just completed by the Friends. He emphasized the importance of the purchase of the Highland Way property, the ongoing success of our Education Programs, and the completion

of several important Conservancy restoration projects.

New Board of Directors members Ben Grawe,

Susan Gruber, Paul Helgeson, Rick Kurz, Rod Miller, Lou Reilly, and Julia Riley were elected. Jim welcomed them and looked forward to the support they will provide to the Friends. At the same time, he recognized members who will be leaving the Board, including Trudy Laffer, Lou Maher, Gail Shea, and Dan Stapay. Their contributions to

The meeting, attended by 79 members and guests, marked the 12th Anniversary of the Friend's!

the Friends were substantial as they aided the formation of the John C. Bock Urban Forest with its recognition plaque and kiosk, led the publication of our newsletter, and worked toward the elimination of the Highland Way property debt.

Hagen Hedfield, Friends' Treasurer, summarized the organization's financial position, noting that generous member contributions enabled introduction of new and continuing Conservancy programs. He reviewed progress to date in eliminating the Highland Way property debt.

Restoration and Management Committee chair, Guerdon Coombs, noted that the Friends' plan to restore over 100 acres of Conservancy from pasture to prairie or savanna had been completed. Guerdon reported that our present professional Conservancy restoration, funded by our \$50,000 North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant, was successfully concluding.

Colleen Robinson Klug reviewed the Friends' Education Programs with an emphasis on our Naturalist Program, now led by ten naturalists, that met with over 300 students in the Conservancy during the summer. Work continued on development of our excellent "Branch Out" educator's guide. Our Education Programs were aided by the receipt of substantial grants from the Monsanto Corporation, Recreational Equipment Incorporated (REI) and the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB).

Sally Kefer reviewed current development plans in the Pheasant Branch springs recharge area and efforts by the Friends and others to assure that the springs continue to flow unreduced

... See *Annual Meeting*, p. 4

"Caring for Our Local Place" Conference June 23

Make local connections & take a tour of our Conservancy projects

Holy Wisdom Monastery, the former St. Benedict Center located on County M near Governor Nelson State Park, will host a conference on the environment on Saturday, June 23. Titled "Caring for our Local Place on Earth," the conference will focus on the mission of local environmental organizations and the motivations behind their activities.

The Friends of Pheasant Branch are participating in the conference. In addition to a booth at the conference site, the Friends have organized a morning tour to show the work we and others are doing in the Conservancy. Present plans call for Tom Bernthal and Andrea Gargas to conduct the tour.

Other local participants include the Natural Heritage Land Trust, The Prairie Enthusiasts, and The Aldo Leopold Foundation. Cal Dewitt of the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at UW-Madison and Rich Henderson of The Prairie Enthusiasts will be keynote speakers.

This free conference is for anyone interested in learning more about local environmental activities. A lunch fee of about \$5.00 may be necessary.

For further information, contact Jim O'Brien at 836-3617, or at his email address, jaobrien1@wisc.edu.

Questions and Answers: Agricultural Runoff



Question:

There are many dairy farms in the Pheasant Branch Nature Conservancy watershed. What does Dane County do to help protect water quality from agricultural runoff from farms?

Answer:

The Dane County Land and Water Resources Department (LWRD) of the Land Conservation Division (LCD) works with farmers daily to encourage the use of best management practices (BMPs) effective in managing complex, agricultural runoff issues. Conservation planning, technical assistance, and education are the primary outreach tools Dane County uses when working with landowners. Many local, state, and federal programs are available to farmers to implement BMPs that help protect and preserve the water resources here.

Dane County adopted, and the LWRD administers, Chapter 14 of the Ordinances, which addresses new or

expanding storage structures, as well as leaking and abandoned ones.

Best Management Practices for dairy farms include management and control of:

- ◆ Overflow of wastes from livestock manure storage facilities;
- ◆ Unconfined manure piles in a water quality management area;
- ◆ Direct runoff of wastewater from a feedlot or stored manure into the waters of the State; and
- ◆ Unlimited livestock access to waters of the State in a location where high concentrations of animals prevent the maintenance of adequate sod or self-sustaining vegetative cover.

The most recent amendment to Dane County's Ordinance Chapter 14 requires winter spreading permits/plans for the application of stored, pumpable liquid manure on frozen, snow- or ice-covered cropland. The plan identifies

areas farmers may spread in the winter and areas where no spreading is allowed.

Areas prohibited from winter spreading include:

- ◆ Waterways or other channelized flow;
- ◆ Non-harvested vegetation;
- ◆ Within 30 feet on either side of a waterway;
- ◆ Within 200 feet upslope of a well, tile inlet, sinkhole, gravel pit, or fractured bedrock at the surface;
- ◆ Within 300 feet of a stream or drainage ditch;
- ◆ Within 1,000 feet of a lake; or
- ◆ Slopes greater than 12%.

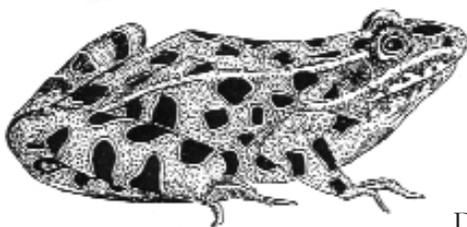
The LCD also works with landowners to improve riparian areas and in-stream

... See *Ag Run-off*, p. 6

Annual Meeting Report . . .

from present levels.

Brian Butler noted that our \$3,000,000 purchase of the Highland Way property had been completed and that the \$180,000 debt we incurred to complete the purchase had been reduced to \$118,000 by the year's end. Brian described future fundraising events planned by the Friends' Fundraising Committee.



Guest speaker Topf Wells, Chief of Staff for County Executive Kathleen Falk, described the County's "Design Dane!" plan intended

continued from p. 3 . . .

to strengthen land use in both rural and urban areas of the County. He stressed the recognition in the plan of protecting areas such as the Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

Jim O'Brien closed the meeting by thanking all for their ongoing support of the Friends. He gave particular thanks to Topf Wells for his presentation and to Andrea Gargas for successfully organizing the meeting.

You can stay up-to-date on all Friends of Pheasant Branch activities and events by visiting our Web site: www.pheasantbranch.org. You'll also find information on giving to the Friends and past issues of our newsletter.

Warblers in Our Woods

Warblers are fascinating in many ways. Tiny and restless, they can bedevil even the experienced bird-watcher trying to identify them. Most warblers migrate back from the south in April and early May, just as the trees begin to leaf out. They flit among the leaves, or suspend themselves from twigs. Often they vanish the moment your binoculars focus in.

Their calls and songs, especially prominent at this season, provide an essential clue. In fact, warblers get identified more often by sound than by sight. We may long to observe the striking colors these birds put on as mating time draws near; but their songs are equally alluring, and the knowing birder will recognize the call.

Warblers come to the Pheasant Branch Conservancy in considerable numbers each year. Some pause only to head further north to their mating grounds. Other warblers stop here to nest, breed, and raise their young. Spring's the best season to watch these birds. The migration is more concentrated than in the fall; and their movements are more conspicuous than during the summer months.

Residents of Middleton often equate the Conservancy with the extensive woods and marshland north of Century Avenue. But the primary search for spring warblers takes place in the narrow southern corridor through which the Pheasant Branch Creek flows down from Parmenter Street. This stretch of the Conservancy consists of two segments on either side of Park Lawn.



Like the birds themselves, bird watchers need to rise early. Have your binoculars in hand, along with a reliable guide. Be alert for the slightest movement in the trees along the path and for the faintest call from above. Binoculars must quickly fix on the bird before it flies off, a skill which comes only through trial and error.

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As you read these words, the spring migration will probably be underway. If not, it will begin very soon. If you prefer leaving your guidebook at home, have an image of each common species firmly in mind. Names are often precise and helpful. There are Yellow-rumped and Yellow-throated Warblers, a Chestnut-sided one and a Bay-breasted. Similar names, however, can confuse the novice birder—the Black-and-white Warbler and the Blackpoll, for example. The Blackburnian might be easier to identify, the striking orange of the male throat and the paler yet noticeable hue of the female one giving an unforgettable clue.

Learn to identify these migrating birds quickly, along with other obvious ones such as the American Redstart. Then, take on new challenges—distinguish the Tennessee from the Nashville Warbler according to their songs. Or, forsaking our warblers for the moment,



catch the Kingfisher's cry on one of its periodic flights upstream or down. You should find this an engrossing exercise, one sufficiently exacting that even long-time birders occasionally disagree about a given call or sighting.

Keep in mind that warblers, like other songbirds, are very sensitive to any nearby threat. Remember that the woods are their home. Watch their activities from the trail, and leave their environment as you found it. Experienced birders tend to keep moving, leaving undisturbed the birds they have spotted while searching for what's beyond the next bend.

Begin your spring day with the migrating warblers. It will seem even more full of promise.

Illustrated bird guides are available, from the pioneering Roger Tory Peterson to the more contemporary David Allen Sibley. Middleton's own Eagle Optics store offers professional advice on binoculars. John Feith's CD, *THE BIRD SONG EAR TRAINING GUIDE*, provides an indispensable tool for identification.

Two publications available from the Friends of Pheasant Branch include information on warblers. They are a DNR booklet and checklist entitled, "Birds of Pheasant Branch Conservancy," and a similarly titled DVD that includes both bird songs and color photos. Send requests for these materials to the Friends of Pheasant Branch, P.O. Box 628242, Middleton, WI 53562-8242. The DVD is \$13 and includes postage and handling costs.

Kids for the Earth Summer Family Programs

Spend some of your time together this summer discovering the treasures of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Surrounded by beautiful prairie flowers, woodlands, wildlife and more, you'll find a fun-filled retreat in the middle of the city.

Kids for the Earth Summer Programs welcome kids on their own or families, but children under 8 years old must be accompanied by an adult. All events start at Orchid Heights Park in Middleton, and cost \$3 per person or \$10 per family.*



Parents and kids will love our affordable summer nature programs.

Join naturalists, educators, and resource experts for hands-on activities on these great topics:

Tuesday, June 12 - 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm
Water World: Explore amazing critters from the Conservancy's hidden underwater world!

Saturday, July 14 - 8:30 pm – 10:00 pm
Walk When The Moon Is Full: See nature and wildlife in a new light!

Join a Watershed Walk

These walks, scheduled from April 25 through June 20, will explore natural areas within the Upper Yahara River Watershed and beyond. The watershed walk for Pheasant Branch Conservancy is June 6. Meet at 6:30 pm at the Pheasant Branch Conservancy – Dane County parking lot on Pheasant Branch Road, 1.2 miles north of Century Avenue.

Ken Bradbury, Hydrogeologist for the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, and Janet Kane, Friends' member will lead the walk. They will provide an overview of the watershed and consider critical connections to our ground water and adjacent restoration projects.

For more information on the watershed walks contact: Nancy Schlimgen, Naturalist, Benedictine Women of Madison at Holy Wisdom Monastery nschlimgen@benedictinewomen.org or 836-1631 ext. 159. A description of all the watershed walks can be found online at: www.benedictinewomen.org.

Tuesday, July 24

10:00 am – noon

Say, Cheese: Use an expert photographer's digital camera to bring the Conservancy home with you! Pre-registration required by July 10, 2007.

Friday, August 10

9:00 pm – 10:30 pm

Universe in the Park: Stargazing and other peeks into space with UW Astronomy staff.

*No charge for this program. Please pre-register.

Sunday, August 26

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

River Adventure: Join paddling experts from Rutabaga for a scenic glide up the Pheasant Branch. Pre-registration required by August 12, 2007.

For more information contact:

Colleen Robinson Klug, Education Coordinator, Friends of Pheasant Branch, 231-6035, colleen_fopb@charter.net; or Janet Kane, Education Committee Chair, Friends of Pheasant Branch, 831-1452, kanefam@mailbag.com.

These summer activities are possible through a grant from the Monsanto Fund.

Ag Runoff . . . *continued from p. 4 . . .*

habitat through their streambank protection program. Urban erosion control and stormwater management is also very important to the health of Dane County's lakes, rivers and streams. The LWRD administers ordinances that address urban threats to water quality.

For more information, see the Dane County Land Conservation Division website at www.countyofdane.com/landconservation, or contact Patrick Sutter, Dane County Conservationist at 224-3730, sutter@co.dane.wi.us.

Do you have a question about something you've seen in the Conservancy? If so, drop us a note and we'll try to find the answer and print it in the newsletter for the benefit of all our friends and neighbors. Contact us via email at: office@pheasantbranch.org

Spring Field Trips & Volunteer Opportunities

Lend a Hand . . . Volunteer for Restoration

Clearing Work Dates – May 5 & 19; 9:00 am to noon

We have spring clearing work sessions planned for adult volunteers and Middleton High School students. We'll be removing invasive bushes, mostly buckthorn and honeysuckle, cutting stumps with loppers and bow saws, and then treating the stumps. Work dates are on Saturday mornings: May 5 & 19 from 9:00 am to noon. We meet at the Pheasant Branch Conservancy - Dane County parking lot on Pheasant Branch Road, 1.2 miles north of Century Avenue. Bring work gloves if you have them, or we'll supply them if you don't.



Adam Schneider, Jeff Wild, & Susan Gruber brave 90 degree heat to volunteer in the prairie last summer!

Garlic Mustard Clearing Dates – TBA

We are also planning several work days to remove garlic mustard from the south end of the Conservancy. This plant was brought here from Europe as a culinary herb; but it escaped from our gardens, and now it is an invasive pest in many of our woodlands. Students as well as adult volunteers are needed. We pull up the plants, roots and all (you will need gloves to protect your hands), and put them in large plastic bags. No dates are scheduled as yet, but you will get notification by email.

If you're interested in any of these projects, watch for email announcements 1 to 2 weeks prior to each event. If you're not on our email list and want to be, sign up at office@pheasantbranch.org. Address any questions to Guerdon Coombs at 831-8823 or coombs@charter.net.

Tree Planting Work Day – May 11; 9:00 am – noon

Help plant trees near the springs. We need about 10 people to complete this task. Meet at the Pheasant Branch Conservancy - Dane County parking lot on Pheasant Branch Road, 1.2 miles north of Century Avenue. Call Susan Gruber at 836-3848 or email her at sgruber42@hotmail.com if you can help.

Get Out and Get Birding

Late April and May is the time of year for birding in the Conservancy. The hot spot for seeing migrating warblers is the stream corridor south of Century Avenue back to the high school. Madison Audubon hosts a number of early morning “warbler walks” in May. They meet at the Branch Street Retreat parking lot at the corner of Century Avenue and Branch Street at 6:00 am, and walk south along the stream path toward the high school. Those arriving after 6:00 am may be able to catch up to the group.



- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Tuesday, May 1 | Leader: Jesse Peterson |
| Thursday, May 10 | Leader: Mike McDowell |
| Thursday, May 17 | Leader: Chuck Heikkinen and Delia Unson |

Friends of Kettle Ponds Bird Hike: Saturday, May 5, from 7:30 am – 9:30 am, around Tiedeman Pond in Middleton. Meet at the corner of Voss Parkway and Sweeney Drive. Kim Benton, Audubon Society member and DNR biologist, will lead the walk.

Beginning Birders - A Special Pheasant Branch Walk: Sunday, May 6, 6:30 am. Join Mike McDowell, Friends member, at the Branch Street Retreat. Mike will bring some extra binoculars for those who need them. This is an excellent opportunity for folks just getting started in birding to get helpful hints from an expert.

JOIN US, BE A FRIEND!

Yes! I want to be a member of the Friends of Pheasant Branch and be part of the action.

\$10 Student \$20 Individual \$30 Family \$50 Corporate Sponsor \$100 Friend of the Friends

\$ _____ **Highland Way Acquisition Fund Donation**

Name: _____

Street: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please send your membership and donation checks to:

Friends of
Pheasant Branch
P.O. Box 628242
Middleton WI
53562-8242



**Thank You for
Your Support!**

May 2007

Clip & Mail Today!!

*Don't miss our Summer
Field Trips & Family
Programs!
See pages 6 & 7 inside . . .*

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