



SPRINGS

Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy Newsletter

Annual Meeting on January 28

Please join us to celebrate another successful year

By Julia Riley

Please join the Friends on Wednesday, January 28, 2009, to celebrate another successful year of restoring, preserving and promoting the value of conservancy lands. The annual meeting and dinner at the Hilton Garden Inn of Middleton, 1801 Deming Way in Greenway Station, will feature an overview of accomplishments this year, the election of 2009 board members, the 2009 operating budget, and guest speaker Richard Lathrop.



Lathrop (pictured here) is a lake researcher for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and holds honorary appointments with both the UW–Madison Center for Limnology and the University’s Gaylord Nelson Institute for

Environmental Studies. His presentation, “Eutrophication and its management in the Yahara Lakes: long-term perspectives with an eye to the future”, draws upon his research regarding the importance of improving water quality in Lake Mendota as the lead lake in our chain of lakes. The influence of the Pheasant Branch Creek watershed on Lake Mendota water quality will be discussed.

Social hour begins at 5:30 pm with dinner at 6:00 pm. Meal prices vary from \$17-25 depending on your selection. Please see our special mailing on the Annual Meeting to make your dinner reservation or contact Lou Reilly at either 831-3436 or lreilly@tds.net to obtain reservation information. We hope to see you there!

2009 Phenology Calendar Available

By Andrea Gargas

FOPB is sponsoring the 2009 Phenology Calendar. Phenology is the study of timing of plant and animal cycles. Plants, animals, and other organisms respond to the seasons, coordinating their life stages with light levels or temperature. Changes that depend on light levels come on roughly the same date every year; changes that depend on temperature or moisture levels will vary based on the weather each year. Each



month of the calendar has a list of phenological events expected for that period. For plants watch for the first bloom or seed set, with animals keep an eye out for their arrival and departure, and when they are emerging or calling. Some years have early sightings, other years are later. Over the last few decades there have been notable shifts in the timing of phenological events, suggesting climate changes. Use the sample

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Protect. Restore. Enjoy.



FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

An update on the restoration plan for the John C. Bock Community Forest appears on page 3 of this newsletter. Once the final version of the plan emerges and the last round of public input occurs, the Friends of Pheasant Branch will push for rapid implementation of the project. We are poised to move forward, with \$20,000 available for 2009 from a Madison Community Foundation grant. The City of Middleton has also designated funds for the project in its capital budget for the same year.

I invite our membership to participate in the public input process. We hope that many of you will interest yourselves in the restoration plan; and, if you have the time and enjoy working outdoors, we invite you to join in the work sessions that will take place on site. Camaraderie is always in the air on these occasions, and the exercise can substitute for several visits to your athletic club of choice. Tempted by the home-baked cookies and cakes served at each break, you might end up requesting a recipe or two. Keep this in mind for the regular work sessions as

well. Coordinated by Guerdon Coombs and Susan Gruber, these gatherings take place on a regular basis. The schedule for this spring can be found on page 7.

Going back to Bock, note too that the dedication of this land is drawing near. The dedication will feature a plaque inscribed with the names of major donors to the purchase of the land. Our thanks to Dan Stapay and to Rod Miller, both of whom put considerable time and energy into this permanent recognition of the donors.

We plan to have this newsletter out shortly before the annual meeting and dinner. These gatherings provide camaraderie just as the work sessions do. Join us then if you are able, and learn more than I can say here of what the Friends have in mind for 2009.

Sincerely,

Jim O'Brien

Free Wetland Tools Online

New web-based tools developed by the Department of Natural Resources help current and prospective property owners identify wetlands and provide planners with information on site suitability for development projects. The gateway for the new tools is the DNR web site: <http://dnr.wi.gov/wetlands/locating.html>. Interactive soils maps available through the DNR Surface Water Data Viewer show wetlands and potential wetlands. The map shows wetlands that have been officially mapped through the Wisconsin Wetland Inventory process and areas that may be wetlands based on their soil types.

Building or making other improvements in wetlands is prohibited by state and federal law unless the property owner can show it's unavoidable and receives the necessary permits. The Thursday, February 19, 2009 conservancy day program (see page 6) will include how to access the Surface Water Data Viewer wetland maps.

New Soils Study is Available

A new study, "Soils of Pheasant Branch Conservancy", is available from the Friends web site at www.pheasantbranch.org/pdf/PBCSoilsFinalReport.pdf. The study was sponsored by the Friends and prepared by three local scientists using the United States Department of Agriculture's Web Soil Survey information. The study analyzes the suitability of conservancy soils for various recreational uses such as picnic areas, paths, trails, and roads.

Maps in the report identify the types of soils present and limitations for recreational development. More than half the soils in the conservancy are under water or near saturation during much of the year and are somewhat or very limited for most recreational uses. The soil study findings confirm the logic of maintaining the conservancy area in a primarily undeveloped state.

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Paving Conservancy Trails?

A new transportation plan for the city recommends it

By Julia Riley

The City of Middleton's proposed 2009 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan can be viewed on the City's web site: www.ci.middleton.wi.us. The plan outlines the City's vision for integrating walking and bicycling into a regional multimodal transportation system. The city-wide system identifies recommendations for four corridors defined as: 1) The Pheasant Branch Trail; 2) The Railroad Corridor Trail; 3) The Park Street Corridor; and 4) Century Avenue. If all the components of the plan are implemented, every Middleton resident would be able to access a key bikeway within 5 minutes from their home.



Under a new city plan, part of the Conservancy Loop bike trail could be paved. However, pavement may have a negative ecological impact.

The Pheasant Branch Trail is considered by the City plan as analogous to a "Capital City Trail" for the north side of Lake Mendota, eventually linking to Governor Nelson State Park. The plan calls for paving the trail from Parmenter Street to Century Avenue and the western and northern segments of the conservancy loop. The southeastern segment of the conservancy loop would remain crushed aggregate. If feasible, the paved section of the trail would include three-foot-wide unpaved shoulders with compacted surface on

each side of the paved surface to accommodate joggers. Porous pavement would be used.

The justification for paving these sections of the Pheasant Branch Trail is that the current trail surface, crushed aggregate, is generally unusable by in-line skaters and slow down the speed of bicyclists. In expanding the usefulness of the trail to accommodate the different pacing needs of multiple users: joggers, walkers, bikers, and inline skaters, the plan also contains recommendations for mitigating user conflicts.

In the new "Soils of Pheasant Branch Conservancy" study (see article on page 2) the majority of soil types located in the western and northern segments of

the conservancy loop were determined to be very limited for accommodating paved roads. Much of the existing bike trail in this area traverses soil type Houghton muck. These soils are very sticky, fibrous soils containing decaying vegetation and other natural materials that do not conform well to revising the surface of the soils. They also do not support reshaping and capping with other materials because of a shallow water

... See *Conservancy Trails*, page 4

Bock Forest Restoration Planning Continues

By Jim O'Brien

The Fall 2008 newsletter featured an article on Mike Anderson and the restoration plan he is writing for the Bock Forest. The article described a walking tour of the Bock land, along with Mike's comments on the land's recent history, the problem of invasive plant species, and some general principles on how to restore the area.

A follow-up session took place at the Middleton Public Library on November 6. This session elicited input from Ecology Club students at Middleton High School, from members of the Friends and from residents of the Highland Way area. Mike used slides to



A restoration plan for the Bock Forest will be presented to the city in January. Stay tuned for more information.

show the successive stages which land like the Bock parcel might undergo.

The planning process will conclude about the time this newsletter comes out. Mike will deliver the finished report to the city in January. A final public input session will follow. With the annual meeting scheduled for January 28, some decisive news could well be available then.

New Parkway Could Affect Natural Areas

By Jim O'Brien

People once referred to it as The North Beltline. That changed several years ago as serious planning got underway. Now it's North Mendota Parkway, which describes the type of road envisioned by the engineers who will design it. More a boulevard than an expressway, North Mendota Parkway is meant to reduce heavy traffic on County M and Century Avenue in Middleton. While the precise route has not been determined, the parkway will extend between Highway 12 and the current junction of K and M north of the entrance to Governor Nelson State Park. The route could more or less follow the western segment of K or run further south, even skirting the present northern boundary of Middleton.

Like many road projects, this one is controversial. Reaction to the project ranges widely, with some people believing that funding might be better spent on public transportation and others claiming the road is needed since automobile traffic in the area will surely increase. Some residents of Springfield have argued the route should be as close to Middleton as possible. For many farmers in the area any loss of fertile cropland and pastures would be regrettable. The land traversed by the projected routes contains natural resources aside from the rich farmland. Dorn

Creek runs parallel to the eastern segment of the proposed routes; the western part of each road would pass through the recharge area of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy springs.

Planning for the road has included a proposal for natural resource areas. These areas contain wetlands, ridges, prairies, and other features, as well as the recharge lands. For the springs the most crucial of the proposed natural resource areas covers the eastern two-thirds of the farm immediately north of the conservancy. Designation as a natural resource area does not automatically result in a total preservation of land. Rather, funding becomes available to preserve natural features judged worthy of such treatment. These judgments derive from the standard negotiation that takes place between landowners, governments, developers, and residents, all of whom have a stake in how we use the land.

A committee made up of representatives from Dane County, the City of Middleton, and the Towns of Westport and Springfield, has been deliberating about the road during this period of preliminary planning. Its findings, which will encompass the natural resource areas, will eventually be passed on to the Dane County officials for further deliberation and resolution.



Conservancy Trails . . .

table and their tendency to remain wet throughout the year. Reconstruction of the bike path to include a deeper base material to accommodate pavement may also impede the hydrological features of the landscape in these areas. The FOPB hopes that the City will consider soil suitability information in their decision-making process for the Pheasant Branch Trail.

The report does not include any discussion of additional impacts to water quality on Pheasant Branch Creek or the conservancy marshlands due to the construction that will be necessary along the stream bank to install the wider bikeway, base fill, or pavement. The plan also does not include long-term maintenance costs for upkeep and patching

Continued from page 3

of the paved trail.

A formal public hearing on the City's proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was held on January 13, 2009, at the Middleton City Hall Council Chambers.

Get Info and Share Your Comments:

For more information on the plan or to comment on the plan contact Mark Opitz, Assistant Planning Director and Zoning Administrator, mopitz@ci.middleton.wi.us, 827-1070.

Nick Hamilton

A Friends of Pheasant Branch Profile

By Julia Riley

Nick Hamilton, a senior at Middleton High School, has this advice for youth who want to complete a volunteer leadership project: "Don't be afraid to start a project. Do it over a period of time. The hardest work is planning. Don't be afraid to plan it. Once you get to the project stage, it's the easier part."

Hamilton completed a construction project in the conservancy during the summer of 2008 that helped him earn an Eagle Award – one of the highest awards in Boy Scouting. He completed 21 merit badges, participated in several community service events, and planned and executed his own leadership project.

The first step Hamilton used in planning his leadership project was to send emails to several organizations asking if there were volunteer opportunities. The FOPB responded to Hamilton's email that they could use some help replacing a rotten fence on the hill at the northern end of the conservancy above the springs. Hamilton identified replacement fence materials and received contributions to buy the new fencing components from American Family Insurance, the FOPB, and other contributors.

Hamilton has been a Boy Scout since kindergarten and is cur-



Nick Hamilton (top), a senior at Middleton High School, raised funds and organized a fence-building project as service toward his Eagle Scout award.

rently a member of Boy Scout Troop 140, a large troop with over 60 Scouts. About 30 members of his troop assisted Hamilton with the removal of the old fence and new construction. They placed stone pads under the fence posts and used treated lumber to prevent rotting of the posts. While the troop was working on their own construction project at the top of the hill, they took time out to consider they were working near the ancient Indian burial mounds constructed roughly a thousand years ago. Both community construction projects involved many hands working together for a common goal. When asked what is the most important thing Boy Scouting has taught him, Hamilton replied, "Leadership and working for the greater good, not just yourself."

The FOPB is grateful for the many hands that have helped work towards the greater good of the conservancy. Eagle Scout Logan Hubbard made a significant contribution to the conservancy in 2008 by spearheading a project in which Scouts built 12 wood duck and 24 blue bird houses. The bird houses were recently mounted in the conservancy. Students from Middleton High School have also played major roles in restoration projects in the conservancy and water quality monitoring efforts. Youth are invited to contact the FOPB for ideas on other leadership opportunities with the conservancy.

Get Your Phenology Calendar . . .

Continued from page 1

lists in the calendar to make your own records on the space provided for future comparisons.

The month of March has a feature on how to use weather radar to predict when migratory birds will be coming through. Surprisingly, many of our daytime songbirds travel at night when the air is calmer and cooler, and they have less chance of running into predators. As large flocks of birds take off after sunset (exodus) you can find characteristic doughnut-shapes around Nexrad Doppler Radar stations. From radar studies we see that Spring nocturnal migration comes in waves starting in March, with a peak in May, and an abrupt drop off after June 15. Fall migration starts in early August, peaks in September,

and tapers off by the end of November.

As with last year's calendar, the 2009 Phenology Calendar features full-color photographs by local photographers. It also includes natural history notes, and sunrise and sunset data for each month.

The 2009 calendar is \$12 plus \$2 shipping. Download order forms at www.pheasantbranch.org or send a check and address information to the FOPB, P.O. Box 628242, Middleton WI 53562-628242.



EDUCATION CORNER: Conservancy Days Program News

Celebrating Conservancy Days in 2009

By Colleen Robinson Klug

Conservancy Days was a huge success in 2008 and served more than 400 participants. All of our Conservancy Day programs are free of charge. This is possible due to donations of all amounts at the events and through new and continued membership in our Friends' organization. Thank you for your generous gifts in 2008, and please renew or sign on for your first time membership in 2009. Keep up-to-date at www.pheasantbranch.org and mark your calendars for these special events the third Thursday of each month:

Wisconsin's New Surface Water Data Viewer

Thursday, February 19; 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm
Middleton High School, 2100 Bristol Street
Make maps and find customized information in no time about Wisconsin's water resources. Whether you want to know about wetland soil types in your community or you are going fishing and want to check out a new spot - this online tool can help. It's all at your fingertips and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' staff will teach you through how to use this incredible new resource. This program is best for ages 12 and up and will involve using a computer and an internet-based tool.

Spring Is For The Birds!

Thursday, March 19; 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
Location to Be Announced
Join the owner of Madison's Wild Birds Unlimited store for an evening of winged wonder, bird-brained facts, and the building of your own new housing development. Well, to be accurate, you'll have an opportunity to build a bird house for your yard, which will help your chickadee and wren friends

Programs for Educators

Project Wet and Project Wild Training

April 2, 16, and 30, 2009; 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Middleton Alternative Senior High, 2429 Clark Street
Cost: Varies depending on credit option and affiliation from \$0 to \$120.00.

Kids for the Earth is sponsoring award-winning curriculum training again in 2009 in partnership with the Middleton Cross Plain Area School District. With funds from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board, we are connecting Middleton Cross Plains Area School District teachers and the naturalists who often work with us at the conservancy to enhance science,

this season. Please RSVP by February 1, 2009, to Colleen at 608-231-6035 or education@pheasantbranch.org. You'll buy your own kit to assemble for \$15, payable at the event. If you prefer not to build a bird house, please come anyway! There will be plenty to learn and do for all ages at this event.

John C. Bock Community Forest Walk

Thursday, April 16; 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm
Orchid Heights Park shelter, 3960 Valley Ridge Road
In December 2005, the Friends of Pheasant Branch, with the help of countless generous supporters, purchased approximately 19 acres of land adjacent to the Pheasant Branch Conservancy off of Highland Way. A management plan is in the works for this parcel, now named the John C. Bock Community Forest, owned by the City of Middleton. Come and learn more about its future as we discuss plans and envision an even healthier space for people, wildlife, and all of the resources of the conservancy, thanks to this addition to the property.

PEAK with REI and Leave No Trace

Thursday, May 21, 2009; 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm
Orchid Heights Park shelter, 3960 Valley Ridge Road
Join REI's education staff for an evening of teaching kids about the outdoors...how to enjoy, and care for it. It's REI's PEAK Program - Promoting Environmental Awareness in Kids. This is a hands-on, interactive program on camping and Leave No Trace principles. You and your children will learn how to have fun outside in an environmentally responsible way and have lots of fun in the process! RSVPs especially appreciated for this event - Colleen at 608-231-6035 or education@pheasantbranch.org.

art, and social studies curriculums in 5 grade levels. This will be the third year in a row that our professional development options have reached out beyond our own Branch Out! curriculum and offered nationally-recognized staff development. This program is available to all area educators in both public and private schools, as well as informal educators who guide classes and other youth groups. Teachers register through the district website at: <http://www.mcpasd.k12.wi.us/prodev.classlist.cfm> Others contact Colleen to register at 608-231-6035 or education@pheasantbranch.org.

Find out more about Project Wet and Project Wild at: www.projectwet.org and www.projectwild.org.



GET OUT THERE: Field Trips & Volunteer Opportunities

Restoration & Management: The On-going Journey

By Susan Gruber

Fall came and went; but projects in the Conservancy never end. Each season brings different types of work that are done in many places throughout this incredible place. You may have noticed several changes as you biked around the gravel trail or walked around Fredrick's Hill.



Every fall Middleton High School students along with other volunteers clear invasive plants. This year the work began with 70 students from the University of Chicago's High School joining Wayne Pauly, naturalist for Dane County, clearing invasive species along the north prairie fence line and just to the west of that trail. Middleton High



Boy Scouts from Troop 140 braved the first snows this winter to remove old barbed-wire fencing and debris around the famed springs.

School work days continued with the clearing between the east trail and the circular trail around the hill. You might even notice some carpet samples around small oak trees, helping to protect them from competition with surrounding plants and holding in more moisture under the mat.

A major change in the County section of the Conservancy was the removal of the fence around the springs on November 30th. Andrew Zutz organized a group of Boy Scouts from Troop 140, some parents, and a group of other hardy souls to brave the weather and take out barbed

wire, fence, posts and everything else ugly surrounding the springs. Take a look! It's amazing how the removal of that fence improved the view and landscape. Through a grant, a crew then came in to remove the red-osier dogwood, willow, and honeysuckle in the wetlands east of the creek. The goal is to restore the sedge meadow, a rare plant community, and to expand the grassland habitat beneficial to bird populations that are declining due to the need for substantial blocks of habitat (40+ acres).

Mark Horn organized the annual Thanksgiving work days in the City of Middleton part of the Conservancy. On Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoon many families and individuals cleared invasive shrubs and trees at the bottom of the field near the water tower off Highland Way. Thanks to all those hard working volunteers for helping to manage that area of the Conservancy. Clearing under the big oaks opens up the area, allowing the habitat to support the birds and animals native to it.

Regularly scheduled work dates for 2009 will be the first Thursday and third Saturday from 9:00 am - noon.

Spring Work Parties

Thursdays 9:00 am - noon:
March 5th, April 2nd, May 7th

Saturdays 9:00 am - noon:
March 21st, April 18th, May 16th

Meet at the Pheasant Branch Dane County Parking lot (fire number 4864) 1.2 miles north of Century Avenue on Pheasant Branch Road unless instructed otherwise. Additional work days are periodically scheduled. If you would like to be added to our email list to receive a reminder of work sessions, please contact Susan Gruber at *office@pheasantbranch.org* or 836-3848 or, contact Guerdon Coombs at 831-8823. Volunteers are notified via email and signs along the trail. Join a fun group of hard-working people to care for this very special place.

Classes

Qigong in Nature:
Saturday, May 9, 10 am – 11:00 am

Come play in the energy of nature with Qigong (pronounced chee gung) – an ancient Chinese exercise for the mind and body which means “the cultivation of life energy”. Qigong combines slow, gentle movements with breathing and visualizations. Julia Riley will teach a free class: “Connecting Earth and Sky” and “Flying Crane Qigong.” Help celebrate the return of the cranes by spreading your own wings in flight. Meet at the Pheasant Branch Dane County Parking lot 1.2 miles north of Century Avenue on Pheasant Branch Road. Contact Julia at *qiworks@tds.net* or 833-2520 for more info.

You Can Make a Difference



YES! I want to help protect, restore and promote Middleton's Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

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Street: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

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for Your
Support!

- \$10 Student Please send your membership and donation checks to:
- \$20 Individual
- \$30 Family Friends of Pheasant Branch
- \$100 Friend of the Friends Donor P.O. Box 628242

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53562-8242

The Friends of Pheasant Branch Mission:

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

Spring 2009

Attend Our Annual Meeting on
January 28, 2009!
See cover story inside . . .

*To be removed from the newsletter mailing list,
please contact: office@pheasantbranch.org by
email. Thank you.*

Middleton, WI 53562-8242
P.O. Box 628242

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