



SPRINGS

Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy Newsletter

Donation Provides New Boardwalk *Constuction Scheduled This Year*

*By Mark Wegner,
City of Middleton Forester /
Horticulturist*

Thanks to an anonymous Friends of Pheasant Branch donor, a new section of boardwalk will be appearing soon in the Conservancy. This joint project between the City of Middleton and FOPB will help enhance the trail system within the conservancy, begin to address an erosion issue, and honor the wishes of a donor.

The new boardwalk will stretch for 125 feet, be placed over the existing trail, and run parallel to Pheasant Branch Road starting near the existing porous parking area. This area has had



The new boardwalk will be a similar style to others in the Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

persistent erosion problems and the boardwalk will elevate trail users above the issue and eliminate the need for future trail repairs.

In addition to the anonymous donor, Wickcraft Company Inc. is donating a portion of the needed materials and will be assisting with the installation of the boardwalk. Construction and installation of the boardwalk will occur over the upcoming summer.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact FOPB board members or Mark Wegner (City Forester/Horticulturist) at 821-8345.

Cap Brewery “Fun” Raiser Scheduled

By Mollie Rostad

It's time for Conservancy enthusiasts to gear up for our Pheasant Branch 5th Annual Summer “Fun” Raiser hosted at the Capital Brewery in Middleton. This year's event will take place on Sunday, July 17th, 2011, from 3:00 to 9:00 PM, so be sure to save that date, because this year's event is one you won't want to miss!

**Mark your calendar for
Sunday, July 17th!**

The Cash Box Kings, highly acclaimed for its “old-school style of blues” will perform lively, energetic tunes that are sure to get

the crowd movin'! This group has earned several rave reviews for their performances.

Local food vendors will be present to satisfy your taste buds after working up those appetites out on the dance floor. Ticket holders will be eligible for door prizes and do not have to be present to win. A \$10 per person admission donation is suggested. Kids are free.

If you have interest in helping with this event, please contact Mollie Rostad at mollierostad@gmail.com.

SPRING 2011

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Protect. Restore. Enjoy.



FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

Dear Friends,

Spring is a special time of year in the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. While each season brings a unique perspective, none holds more promise than spring. Green grass replaces brown, wildflowers and trees bloom, and the Conservancy is filled with the sights and sounds of migrating birds. We exchange our snowshoes and skis for walking and running shoes and head to the trails.

Each spring I am reminded of the extraordinary nature of the Conservancy, and what an asset it is to our community. Thanks to you, our members and volunteers, the Friends are able to help protect and enhance this precious resource. It is a privilege to represent you on the board and a great honor to serve as president.

2010 was a banner year for the Friends, and 2011 promises to be even better. We will continue to focus on our core mission areas – protection, preservation, restoration and education, in conjunction with the city and county. Projects underway with the city include the Bock

Forest restoration and installation of a boardwalk adjacent to Pheasant Branch Road to prevent trail erosion. We just completed a large prescribed savanna burn. New education programs will be offered for all ages. By connecting Conservancy users to our work and programs, we hope to expand community involvement and membership.

We are also concentrating on strategic planning and expanding our fundraising efforts to ensure the long-term survival of the Friends. An area of interest is the establishment of an endowment fund, which would help protect our programs against short-term fundraising gaps or enable us to implement new projects.

As a fellow Conservancy lover, I invite you to get involved with the Friends in any way you can – as a volunteer, donor or advocate. The opportunities to contribute are many, and the rewards are great.

Sincerely,
Dawn Meyer, President

OUR BOARD

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Send Newsletter Ideas to:
office@pheasantbranch.org

Please Visit Our Website!
www.pheasantbranch.org

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE: DONATE TODAY!

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

Name: _____
Street: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

Memberships:

- \$10 Student
- \$25 Individual
- \$40 Family

Please send your membership and payment to:

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

Additional Support:

- \$50 Contributor
- \$100 Sentinel
- \$250 Guardian
- \$500 Steward
- \$1,000 Conservator
- \$1,000+ Benefactor

Or pay securely with Visa or Mastercard:

Name on the Card: _____
Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Spring 2011

Clip & Mail Today!

Grab Your Camera for Our 2011 Photo Contest!

Open to All Ages - Entry Deadline is September 1st

Our photo contest gives you the opportunity to share the beauty and uniqueness of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy, as seen through your eyes. Explore the Conservancy, in all seasons, to capture the natural beauty of the local flora, an unexpected wildlife sighting or a beautiful sunset. All ages have the opportunity to be honored by leaders in the local photographic and art community! This year, two \$100 grand prizes will be awarded, one youth and one adult.

New this year, the contest has been expanded by one category: Dane County landscape. Although the contest has opened its boundaries past the Pheasant Branch Conservancy, the grand prize and board choice awards will only be awarded to photos taken in the Conservancy. Winning images from the Conservancy will again be featured in the Phenology Calendar.

We will hold a winner's reception at Middleton Art and Framing in December. Winners will provide one print to exhibit and sell. The artist will set their asking price. If the photograph is sold, the proceeds will be split between the artist and the Friends. New this year, the grand prize prints will be raffled at our annual dinner. All of the 2010 judges are returning. Images will be judged on originality, technical excellence, composi-



Trees Overhead by Heidi Bachmeier, age 11, last year's youngest photo contest winner.

tion, overall impact and artistic merit.

All photos must be submitted electronically through the website. Submit three photos for \$25 and each additional image for \$8.

Categories:

- Flowers
- Landscape
- Seasons
- Trees
- Water
- Wildlife
- Abstract
- Digitally Enhanced
- Dane County Landscape

We'd like to thank our sponsors for making this contest possible: Clicks by Colette, Middleton Art and Framing, and the Picture Salon. Please show them your support!

Spread the word to your outdoor-loving, shutter-happy friends about this opportunity to help people protect the Conservancy! Full contest details are on our website - www.pheasantbranch.org.

Friends' Website Features New Prairie Pages

The most recent prairie website addition gives some of the history of the prairies of the Dane County section of the conservancy. Did you know that there is prairie on the hill that has been there for at least several hundred years? Have you ever wondered how or when the prairies at Pheasant Branch were planted? In addition to those topics, the webpage covers prairie maintenance and the county's seed collection and processing operations.

The other webpage provides infor-



Visit our new prairie pages online at:
www.pheasantbranch.org

mation on some of the flora of the county section of the conservancy. If you've ever seen a plant in the conservancy and wondered what species it was, this might be a good place to start looking. In addition to pictures, the webpage provides bloom times, invasives information, and links for each plant to sites with more information. Currently at over 250 species, the list is still growing! Both were designed by volunteer Tom Klein.



Naturalist Notebook: News of Nature in the Conservancy

Stirrings in the Conservancy . . .

By Dale Klubertanz

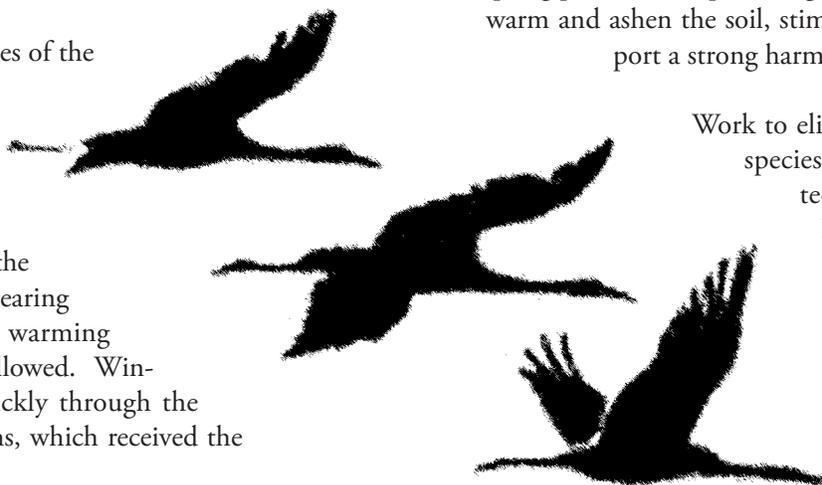
In early March, even as the tilt of the earth began to favor spring with the waning season softening at the edges at the approach of the vernal equinox, the skies opened and once again made the conservancy frosty white for a few more near-frigid days. Still, somewhere unseen, high above the falling snow and clouds came the determined honk and holler of geese heading north for their summer destination and a temporary stop at the Pheasant Branch wetland.

The spirited, reassuring cries of the sandhill cranes could already be heard deep in the marshes, giving voice to the soul of the conservancy. Their calls had signaled the arrival of the many migratory birds appearing in joyful droves with the warming temperatures that soon followed. Winter then melted away quickly through the muddy soil and icy streams, which received the last of its watery farewell.

For those best adapted to winter and inclined to continue their walks through the snowy conservancy, whether by ski, boot or snowshoe, this change had already shown itself in almost imperceptible ways in a day-to-day dialogue with the wilderness which remained unbroken between autumn and spring. By the middle of March, what were the tiny subtle stirrings of that slow yielding process became a swift burst of surrender from season into season everywhere across the landscape. The fast receding snow cover revealed the grasses, sedges and forbs belonging to a summer long gone, though in many ways, remembered as only yesterday.

For others who by nature had burrowed in, hunkered down or found refuge from the winter in the warmth of their homes or in the deep inner roots of their familiar communities, a long period of reflection has given way, opening to the call of spring already underway in the conservancy. A yearning that had been held in hibernation and roused through the yawning of lengthening days and shifting winds has drawn the conservancy walker to wake and resume the dialogue waiting to be renewed throughout the silent, frozen months.

Soon beneath the broken weather-bleached stalks and wide-open dried seedpods poised and still standing among the matted pall-yellow clumps of big blue stem, brings new life which is green and filled with promise. The fuel for the coming generation is found in the remains of last year's prairie and has prevailed, ready to be called into action. Accordingly, for another year, it is aided and nurtured by the efforts of those who have worked caringly throughout the winter to plan and prepare for the spring prairie burns providing the hot smoky fires that will warm and ashen the soil, stimulate new growth and support a strong harmonious community.



Work to eliminate exotics and invasive species has commenced as volunteers spill into Pheasant Branch to do their small part. Prairies, woodlands and wetlands that have felt the tug and pull of generations of evolution over thousands of years will, at the hands of these restoration caretakers, slowly find a fuller expression along side the modern-day world, flourishing in a mutual and growing relationship with human communities around them.

"One swallow does not make a summer, but one skein of geese, cleaving the murk of a March thaw, is the spring."

- Aldo Leopold

At a conversational pace, we have returned to rediscover what we hold in common with this wilderness. Open and in step, we are reminded of our place in the natural cycle and rhythms of these dynamic, and once ancient, native environments. We will wonder and be challenged as to what it means to belong to and be a member of our wild communities. As a measure of our participation we will be asked to consider our lives in the light of our shared and universal welfare, summoned to somehow in our own way, foster protection, preservation and restoration along with receiving and enjoying this wondrous natural heritage. It is only within this shared respect through which we truly prosper.



EDUCATION CORNER: Conservancy Days Program News

**SPECIAL EXPANDED
SUMMER EDITION!**

Great Educational Programs All Summer Long

By Colleen Robinson Klug

Our Conservancy Day Programs for 2011 are off to a cheerful start! In March and April we watched and listened for birds in the conservancy with renowned bird enthusiast, Mike McDowell. 25 people gathered in the beautifully-lit conservancy for our March program. Donning our binoculars with honed senses our reward was seeing or hearing 19 different bird species on this warm (for March), breezy evening. Native sparrows, black-eyed juncos, cardinals, grackles, sandhill cranes, red tail hawks, Canada geese, the conservancy's namesake the ring necked pheasant, and more seemed to appear out of thin air with Mike's delightful mastery leading our way. And although only three hopeful guests stayed long enough to experience it – good things truly do come to those who wait. After 7:20 p.m. we were surrounded by displaying wood cocks! There are over 225 bird species that either call the conservancy home or stop by on migrations.

Join us for FREE Conservancy Day Programs every third Thursday of the month, March – October.

RSVPs are appreciated, but not required. To subscribe for monthly email reminders, email Colleen at education@pheasantbranch.org and request to be put on the list. Here is what is coming up for summer:

Native (and non-native) Forest Blooms

Thursday, May 19, 2011

4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Meet at Orchid Heights Park

Guide: Lisa Johnson, UWEX Horticulture Educator

Did you know that there are countless types of flowers that bloom under the trees in a forest? Some are bright and colorful; some are strange and awkward-looking. Large or small, pleasantly scented or downright stinky, obvious or stealth, these native plants add to the wonder and diversity of our woodlands. If the weather graces us with good timing we'll see some in bloom during the short time they show off in the spring. In any case, we'll



Mike McDowell, a well known birder led the March and April Conservancy Days programs.

see and admire them in green and learn about their place in the forest ecosystem... and perhaps in your shade garden plans! Shrubs and trees and invasive species will be part of our focus as well during this program.

Pheasant Branch Conservancy ROCKS!

Thursday, June 16, 2011

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. (Feel free to join us for part or all of this two hour program.)

Meet at Orchid Heights Park, we will talk at the park shelter and then walk to the springs and Frederick's hill.

Guide: Stephanie Williams, naturalist and geologist

Did you know that all the treasures you see and connect with above ground at the Pheasant Branch Conservancy are supported by something fascinating under the surface? Its true for the animals, birds, plants, colors, water, refreshing breeze, and even the sounds serenading you all the while. Have you ever wondered why, amidst fairly flat land with sedge meadows and marsh land, there is this beautiful, high hill in the conservancy? How did that get there? Why is it still there? And did you know that the conservancy's springs - now some of the only few left in Dane County - are the result of the rocks under your feet when you visit them? The rocks of Pheasant Branch Conservancy have lots of stories to tell about history and nature. Come and listen and learn more about one of your favorite places.

Prairie Flowers and More – A Photo Walking Tour

Thursday, July 21, 2011

6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Meet at the northern most entrance of the conservancy on Pheasant Branch Road

Guide: Michael Knapstein, Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy board member and 35 year veteran photographer.

Bring your cameras and capture the beauty of Pheasant Branch Conservancy prairie flowers at their peak (along with other fea-

Continued on next page . . .



EDUCATION CORNER: Conservancy Days Program News

**SPECIAL EXPANDED
SUMMER EDITION!**

Continued from Page 5 . . .

tures)! Whether you are an amateur or esteemed photo enthusiast, you'll enjoy this walking tour with international award-winning nature and landscape photographer Michael Knapstein. His photo tips and suggestions will help you get the best images possible -- just in time for the Friends of Pheasant Branch Photo Contest! Learn more about the contest at www.pheasantbranch.org and about Michael at www.knapsteinphotography.com

Prairie Lore – Plant Stories

Thursday, August 18, 2011

7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Lussier Heritage Center
3101 Lake Farm Road,
Madison, WI 53711

Guide: Wayne Pauly, Dane County
Naturalist and prairie enthusiast

Prairies have been part of the North American landscape far longer than humans have been here. Have you ever wondered what it must have felt like to live among the tall grasses of the great plains prairies? We can grasp a tiny glimpse of the experience by exploring the relationship between these plants and the people who did. The prairies offered them much more than challenges, safety, and food. How about art and entertainment? Join us and discover the stories people shared in and about the prairies, the history of some prairie plant names, and imagine yourself amidst the original tall grasses.

We are grateful for the memberships and donations that make these programs possible and free to all. Please consider becoming a Friends' member or donating any amount to the Conservancy Day Programs in 2011 so we may continue these valuable events into the future. Memberships and donations can be given in person at the events or online at www.pheasantbranch.org. Thank you!

Kids for the Earth Field Trips for Schools

The classroom field trip season is in full swing and we have at least 8 classes and 200 students learning in the conservancy this spring! And, although we can still use more help, we've wel-

comed 7 new naturalists to our team, making it easier for us to meet the demand for field trips in the conservancy! If you or someone you know are interested in being a paid naturalist to lead field stations, please contact Colleen. We offer full lesson plans and all of the materials plus observation and training sessions.



The Natural Resource Foundation presents a Besadny grant check to the Friends, from left: Deb Weitzel, Education Committee Chair; Dawn Meyer, President; Barb Roeber, Natural Resources Foundatio; and Colleen Robinson-Klug, education coordinator

Grant Awards for Field Trips

Kids for the Earth is truly making a difference in our community by getting students out of the classroom for hands-on learning and real-world connections. Our contribution is being recognized once again this year with a Natural Resources Foundation Besadny grant award to help us keep transportation costs low, field trip quality high, and service to our district extraordinary for the sake of our children and our future. We are so grateful for the support and intend to honor this award with continued, valuable programming in the Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

Professional Development Series

Our 2011 Education for Sustainability staff development series, originally scheduled for April, has been postponed to autumn. Sustainability is a concept that is more and more important all of the time. Locally the City of Middleton and the Middleton Cross Plains Area School District each have sustainability committees. The Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education moves forward with a statewide Education for Sustainability initiative.

What is sustainability anyway? How does the conservancy fit into a vision of a sustainable community? What is the role of education in sustainability, if any, and how and where do we teach about it? We'll explore these questions and more on local field trips and through many hands-on activities that will be directly transferable to classrooms and other educational settings. Stay tuned for dates and details at www.pheasantbranch.org and join us in autumn!



GET OUT THERE: Field Trips & Volunteer Opportunities

Gearing Up for Spring and Summer!

By Susan Gruber

It's been a quiet winter in the Conservancy... spring has arrived and summer is not far behind. Are you ready to join us for work and camaraderie?

For the second year in a row, the Wisconsin Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program along with The Nature Conservancy and other volunteers did a prescribed burn in the county section of the Conservancy. Dane County completed the burn on the 2 sections of prairie along side the springs. These burns help control the invasive plants, the never ending task of restoring and managing this land. With burns, other plants spring up and need to be cleared, like the sumac, which we tackled last fall. (Although sumac is a native plant, its heavy cover prevents smaller native plants to grow, thus the clearing of it.)

The Middleton High School students are again helping with our restoration work. They work with us on 2 Saturdays in April and May. If you want to see an energetic, hard working group of young people, it is not too late to join us on May 7 and 21. This partnership has been going on for 15 years and these students have been instrumental in helping to shape the area. If I recall, they have helped to clear the top of the hill 3 times over the years. Some of these students have gone on to achieve careers in natural resources. Joleen Stinson, MHS class of 2003, and FOPB board member, is the

Community Coordinator for Rock County Parks. Hans Hilbert, MHS class of 2002, is a Zoning Inspector for Dane County Planning and a City of Middleton Alderman.

Again this summer we will have 5 interns working with us, beginning at the end of May. These college students are a part of a group called the Prairie Partners. Pheasant Branch, Goose Pond, Pleasant Valley Conservancy, The Prairie Enthusiasts, and Lakeshore Preserve each hire one intern. The 5 interns work together for one day per week at each of the sites. Other Friends volunteers join the interns. Wayne Pauly, the Dane County Naturalist, directs the work. Many of these interns pursue careers in environmental



Volunteer Dean Whitley sprays herbicide on freshly cut stumps on Fredricks Hill.

areas. One example is Dylan Kirk, an intern in the summer of 2009, who is working in the stewardship area at the Aldo Leopold Center in Baraboo.

Speaking of Aldo Leopold... if you have not seen the documentary Green Fire about his life and land ethic, do not miss it! The Friends will be scheduling a showing this summer!

If you are not on our workday "reminder" email list and would like to be notified when and where we will be working, please sign up. We also place signs on the trail. Please see the sidebar for more information.

Upcoming Work Parties

Join a fun group of hard-working people to care for this very special place.

**Wednesdays, 9:00 am – noon
May 4, June 1, July 6, Aug. 3**

Invasive plant control, seed collecting & spreading, etc.

**Saturdays, 9:00 am – noon
May 7 & 21 (with high school students) June 18, July 16, Aug 20**

Invasive plant control, seed collecting, etc.

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. Contact Susan Gruber at office@pheasant-branch.org or sgruber42@gmail.com or give her a call at 836-3848 if you would like to be added to our email list to receive a reminder of work sessions. Volunteers are notified via email and signs along the trail.

However, these workdays are always weather and project dependent, thus the importance of being on the email list.

Organize a Group or Office Day

If you are a member of an organization or business that would like to arrange a special workday for your group, please contact us. One of the groups we already had this spring is Blackhawk Church, sponsor of the Love Madison event... a whole day of church members doing volunteer work around the community.

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FRIENDS OF PHEASANT BRANCH CONSERVANCY, INC.

P.O. Box 628242

Middleton, WI 53562-8242

*To receive a paperless newsletter or be removed
from the mailing lists, please contact:
office@pheasantbranch.org. Thank you!*

Summer Events & Activities
Details Inside, pages 5 & 6 . . .

PHEASANT BRANCH CONSERVANCY Spring/Summer Events 2011



Connect with Nature in Your Community

May

- 4th, 7th, 21st - Work Party Days (page 7)
- 19th - Conservancy Days (page 5)

June

- 1st, 17th - Work Party Days (page 7)
- 16th - Conservancy Days (page 5)

July

- 6th, 16th - Work Party Days (page 7)
- 17th - Capital Brewery "Fun" Raiser Event (page 1)
- 21st - Conservancy Days (page 5)

August

- 3rd, 20th - Work Party Days (page 7)
- 18th - Conservancy Days (page 6)

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www.pheasantbranch.org

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The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy

SPRINGS

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