



# SPRINGS

Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy Newsletter

## Bock Community Forest Dedication

*Join us on July 25th to celebrate nature in Middleton*

*By Julia Riley*

Come join us for the dedication of the John C. Bock Community Forest on Saturday, July 25, 2009, from 10:00-11:00 am. A commemorative board will be installed in the kiosk along the main trail with the names of the major donors who helped make the purchase of this piece of conservancy a reality.

This is also a celebration of the land and its past, present, and future generations. Representatives of the Ho-Chunk Nation have been invited to perform a land blessing prior to restoration work, honoring the sacredness of the conservancy as a Native American homeland for over 10,000 years. Local farm families



**John C. Bock, shown here sailing in Alaska, will be remembered during the dedication event.**

are invited to participate in the celebration sharing photographs and stories of their life on conservancy lands during its agricultural phase. Photographs will be available showing how some of the conservancy looked prior to restoration efforts, and the restoration plan will be available for review.

A representative of the John C. Bock Foundation will also be attending the dedication. The FOPB received a grant from the Foundation to assist in the purchase of the former Highland Way property. The Bock Foundation's mission includes the support of conservation groups engaged in the preservation

*Continued on page 4 . . .*

## 'Keep on Rockin' Fundraiser July 19th

*By Rick Kurz*

The 3rd annual Friends of Pheasant Branch summer fundraiser returns again to the Capital Brewery on Sunday afternoon, July 19th, from 3:00 - 9:00 pm. The theme for this year's event will be "KEEP on ROCKIN", as the popular rock n' roll band "The Relics" returns for their 2nd consecutive year. They'll be playing all your favorites from the 50's thru the 90's from 4:00 - 8:00 pm. Once



again, beverages and food will be available for cash throughout the event, and door prizes will be awarded at 8:30 pm (you need not be present to win). Mark your calendars now, and plan on bringing the whole family!

**Join Our Summer FUNdraiser!**

**Sunday, July 19th: 3pm - 9pm  
Capital Brewery in Middleton  
Music, Food, Drinks and Prizes!**

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**Protect. Restore. Enjoy.**



## FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

The Friends present at this year's annual dinner voted to add one member to the board. She is Dawn Meyer, a resident of the Conservancy Condo complex. An active member and past president of the condo board, Dawn knows how to address issues and deal with people. She has considerable experience negotiating with the city, including matters that involve the proximity of the condo development to the conservancy. Her engagement with the conservancy also includes a daily jog around the loop trail, a routine that keeps her up-to-date on what's happening within conservancy boundaries. Dawn has already volunteered to keep track of city plans that bear on the welfare of the conservancy.

Continuity was evident in the election of board officers. In accord with the by-laws, this election took place at the board's February meeting. Rod Miller will continue as secretary, with Rick Kurz doing duty as treasurer. Lou Reilly stays as vice-president and I as president. Having worked together a full year now, we along with the entire board, are poised again to carry out our obligations to the membership and the land.

A glance at the contents of this newsletter will show the scope of board activities. We continue to resist encroachments on the conservancy, the ill-advised plan to pave the main trail being the prime example in recent memory. We carry on and keep enhancing the projects we committed to some years ago—work and restoration parties, study walks and tours, education sessions, and this newsletter itself, to name only those which come immediately to mind. Then there's the "Keep on Rolling" fundraiser scheduled again for mid-summer, an event which is taking on a perennial look. Don't miss another singular event featured elsewhere in the newsletter, the Bock Forest celebration with its dedication of the donor board.

I hope that many of you will attend the dedication ceremony. When you do, check the scene around you. It will soon begin undergoing restoration into the prairie and oak savanna we have envisioned over the last few years.

Sincerely,

*Jim O'Brien*  
Jim O'Brien

## Conservancy Praised in New Birding Guide

The newest Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail Guide includes Pheasant Branch Conservancy as one of Dane County's nine featured top spots for birding, "From Sandhill Cranes and Barred Owls, to chorus frogs and deer, a trip to this property will not disappoint the nature enthusiast."

The Southern Savanna Region edition of the guide completes the series of five highway-based viewing guides highlighting unique ecosystems of Wisconsin for bird and wildlife watching. Site information includes driving direc-



tions, a small locator map, a description of the property, signature and rare birds, and wildlife.

Rare species noted for the conservancy are Snowy Owl and Bell's Vireo. Last summer was the first sighting ever of Bell's Vireo nesting in the conservancy (see Fall 2008 newsletter).

**For more information on the Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail visit: [www.wisconsinbirds.org/trail](http://www.wisconsinbirds.org/trail).**

## OUR BOARD

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*Jim O'Brien*

Vice President  
*Lou Reilly*

Treasurer  
*Rick Kurz*

Secretary  
*Rod Miller*

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*Brian Butler, Martin David, Bruce Froehlke, Ben Grawe, Susan Gruber, Hagen Hedfield, Paul Helgeson, Janet Kane, Dawn Meyer, Henry Niebauer, Julia Riley*

Springs Editor  
*Julia Riley*

Springs Layout & Design  
*Jeffrey Potter*

Illustrations/Photos  
*Jonah Westrich, WI DNR, UW Extension, FOPB.*

Send Newsletter Ideas to:  
[office@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:office@pheasantbranch.org)

**Please Visit Our Website!**  
[www.pheasantbranch.org](http://www.pheasantbranch.org)

# Pheasant Branch Marsh a “Workhorse”

## *Marsh listed as one of 100 state wetland treasures*

By Tom Bernthal

The Wisconsin Wetlands Association has just announced the results of their search to name 100 Wisconsin Wetland Gems that are especially recognized for their ecological and natural community values. They have placed Pheasant Branch Marsh on the list, recognizing it as one of seven “workhorse wetlands” because of the role its springs and other groundwater discharge areas play in producing cold, clear water that flows into Pheasant Branch Creek and Lake Mendota.

It seems especially appropriate that Pheasant Branch Marsh be considered a “workhorse wetland” when you consider all the time and effort so many people have devoted to its preservation, restoration, and conservation. It’s no exaggeration to say that between Friends of Pheasant Branch members and volunteers; Middleton students and teachers; Penni Klein and City of Middleton staff and volunteers; Wayne Pauly and Dane County staff and volunteers; and scientists and natural re-



The non-profit Wisconsin Wetlands Association recognized the marsh for its famed springs and its importance to regional lakes and streams.

sources professionals from too many organizations to name them all here; the amount of hours devoted to the marsh and the larger conservancy can be measured in the tens of thousands.

Why are so many people so inspired to work for the conservancy and its wetlands? Perhaps it is the striking long wetland views one can see from the hill-tops surrounding the marsh, the Sandhill Cranes gliding raucously down to land in the sedge meadows, or the wild rice growing in the shallow waters where spring fed, clear waters meet the main creek. I think the fact that all this is possible to experience mostly within the City of Middleton is what makes it so unique and will continue to inspire our children, if we can conserve and restore it. And that sense of stewardship is what inspires us to be workhorses in the conservancy.

**The full list of 100 Wetland Gems is available online. Visit [www.wisconsinwetlands.org](http://www.wisconsinwetlands.org) to learn more.**

## Friends Outline Concerns with Plan to Pave Trails

By Julia Riley

The Friends submitted comments and recommendations on the City of Middleton’s Bike and Pedestrian Plan 2009. While supporting the overall plan, the Friends recommended against paving the trails in the conservancy and along Pheasant Branch Creek between Parmenter Street and Century Avenue. The Plan calls for paving and widening parts of the current path to 10 feet with additional 3 foot gravel shoulders on each side of the path for joggers.

Pheasant Branch Creek is designated as an Area of Special Natural Resource Interest by the state, and additional care should be taken to address the impacts of paving the trail on storm water man-



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

agement, water quality, habitat, and wildlife. The Friends’ letter outlined concerns regarding paving the trails and noted a recent soils report published by the Friends does not indicate suitability of the soils in the trails to support paving and associated improvements.

The increased number of bikers and speed of bikers on a paved trail may also disturb wildlife and reduce the opportunities for recreational bird watching. Winter recreation may also be affected because the plan calls for snow removal for year-round biking. Many people use the snow-covered trail in winter for skiing and snowshoeing. The entire letter can be read at: <http://www.pheasant-branch.org/pdf/FOPBbikePedLetter.pdf>

# Plan Supports Farmland Preservation

## *Efforts made to balance agriculture and suburban housing*

By Jim O'Brien

Interest continues to grow as the Town of Springfield approaches a decision on its Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) proposal. Guided by the town's growth plan, the TDR initiative will shift permitted housing development from long-term farmland to areas intended for greater development, especially those in the Middleton and Waunakee growth areas. It will accomplish this objective by a system of "transfer ratios" coupled with conservation easements.

For example, a developer could purchase the right to build more densely in a designated area from a landowner in an agricultural area. The latter parcel would then be subject to a conservation easement which would prevent development. Recent public hearings have drawn substantial groups of farmers and other landowners to the town hall. They are there to listen and comment on an intricate plan worked out by the town's Plan Commission over the last five years.

The plan divides the land into "Sending Areas" and "Receiving Areas." Sending Areas cover land intended strictly for agricultural preservation in the town's planning, while Receiving Areas designate zones where homes can be built



**By working together, we can balance wildlife, agricultural and community needs with protection of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy.**

more readily. Clustered housing can occur in one type of receiving area; in other cases an area of less than thirty-five acres would allow for lot development but retain its largely agricultural character. There are other complications, including the right of non-participation on the part of the town's landowners. In this case, the landowner would be subject to current town policies restricting the building of a home to a parcel of thirty-five acres. In fact, the TDR initiative tries to counter the scattered home development inherent in the thirty-five acres minimum requirement; it also aims at the preservation of agriculture as a way of life in Springfield.

Most will applaud this attempt to preserve farming from encroaching suburbanization. The Friends of Pheasant Branch hope that everyone who values the conservancy will take a special interest in the Springfield initiative. We have known for ten years that the recharge area of the conservancy springs lies mainly in the town. We applaud town officials for increasing the ratio value in instances where development rights transfer from the recharge area to land more suitable for development. Keeping the recharge area open will allow the ground to absorb the rainwater upon which the springs so greatly depend.

## **Bock Forest Dedication . . .**

and protection of landscapes containing mature woodlands and old-growth forests believing that, "Trees are an important part of our heritage. Not only do they provide beauty, shade and value to our landscape, they are home to myriad other creatures that we share this planet with. . . . We are rapidly losing the old 'father of the forest', those trees that have been with us since before our county was founded." The Bock Foundation also supports efforts to educate communities and builders about the benefits of mature trees.

John C. Bock was Chief Engineer in charge of Research and Development for Bock Water Heaters and later became Company President/CEO. An inventor, he was directly involved in

*Continued from page 1*

designing and building new prototypes of the energy-saving Turboflue heat exchange machines – innovations in the water heater industry. John was an enthusiastic sailor and loved the water. As work begins on the restoration plan, we look forward to honoring his vision and the Bock Foundation's mission of forest preservation for future generations.

To participate in this special event, drive east on Century Avenue towards Allen Blvd. After Allen Blvd, turn left at the first stoplight at Highland Way. Parking is available along Highland Way. Proceed through the gate up the main trail to the kiosk. For more information on the event, contact Julia Riley, 608-338-9086, or [qiworks@tds.net](mailto:qiworks@tds.net).

# Bock Community Forest Plan Complete

## *Sustainable forestry, community garden elements included*

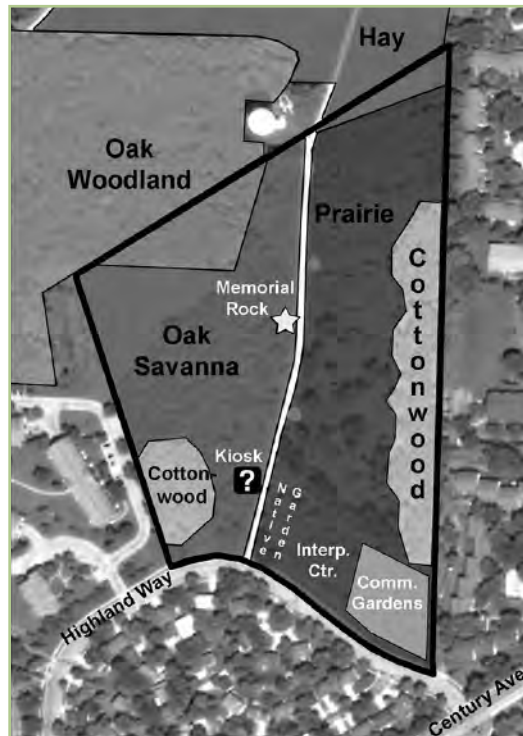
By Jim O'Brien

The Bock Forest Plan is complete. Copies are presently being studied by city officials and staff, and decisions on its implementation are imminent.

Formally known as the John C. Bock Community Forest Ecological Assessment and Management Plan, the document sketches the history of the land and describes its present condition. Only the area marked Oak Woodland, about one acre southwest of the water tower, survives even in part in its natural state. The remaining 18 acres have altered much over the years and will need extensive restoration work.

These 18 acres divide into four units: 10.25 acres of "Old Field," 5.6 acres of "Brushland," 1.4 acres of "West Hay Field," and 0.6 acres of "East Hay Field." The Brushland lies west along the central trail, while the "Old Field" borders the trail on the east. As the name suggests, Brushland is a tangle of invasive woody plants, especially buckthorn and honeysuckle, while "Old Field" is a more open area of similar woody invasives. The two Hay Fields are separated from one another, the east one lying immediately north of Old Field and the west unit wedged between Brushland and Oak Woodland.

Mike Anderson, the consultant for this project, defined these units upon surveying the land through the seasons. Combining his observations with information on soils, drainage, seed banks and other factors, he recommends that the Brushland and Hay Field West be restored to oak savanna, making that unit a natural transition from the present Oak Woodland to the prairie he proposes for the Old Field. Oak Woodland needs attention, in spite of its relatively healthy state. The canopy needs to be opened up to allow in more light; invasive and non-native plants must be eliminated and native plants nurtured. The smaller of the two Hayfield Units could remain as it is, with the proviso that hay be cut later than is currently the case in order to protect the nests of grassland birds.



**The proposal includes vegetation (black text) and cultural additions (white text.)**

***One thing is certain. The City and the Friends of Pheasant Branch will need unstinting support from Middleton residents and beyond to bring Anderson's ambitious and carefully wrought plan to pass.***

savanna. Since the prairie can be established much faster, it will have to wait its turn. And, since the pace of restoration depends heavily on the weather, predictions as to when the savanna might begin to take shape and the prairie come into bloom are unreliable. The entire plan can be viewed online at: <http://www.ci.middleton.wi.us/city/Departments/lands/Studies/Bock.pdf>

The City Council still needs to approve the plan, and that step might well occur before this newsletter reaches its readers. It should be kept in mind that a plan of this sort offers guidelines rather than a rigid program. Some of Anderson's proposals could come under scrutiny—the community gardens notion, for example, which deviates from the purpose for which the land was acquired.

One thing is certain. The City and the Friends of Pheasant Branch will need unstinting support from Middleton residents and beyond to bring Anderson's ambitious and carefully wrought plan to pass. The implementation will take time, labor, and financial support; but we know it will be worth whatever sacrifices we make to see it through.

The plan has cultural aspects as well as natural ones. Two stands of cottonwood trees are set aside for the practice of sustainable forestry. A nature center is envisioned for the indefinite future by the main entrance to the Bock Forest off Highland Way. And a community garden proposed for next year in the southeast corner of the land—0.8 acres for garden plots and 0.2 for mulching piles and the like. Gardeners will be required to devote considerable space to raising plants for the restoration. A premium is put on recycling material right on the land. Cottonwoods and other trees will provide material for signs and fence posts, as well as bark that can be turned into mulch.

Anderson has sketched out an implementation plan, beginning this year and ending in 2018. Initially the focus will be on the Oak Woodland and the areas slated for development into oak



# EDUCATION CORNER: Conservancy Days Program News

## Summer 2009 Conservancy Days

By Colleen Robinson Klug

We are well into our second year of offering Conservancy Day programs and they are still popular, diverse, and free! Join us for the exciting events we have planned this summer on the third Thursday of each month, and stay tuned for what's in store for autumn too. Updates are posted regularly at [www.pheasantbranch.org](http://www.pheasantbranch.org). Your donations and membership dues support these ongoing programs and we thank you!

**The following Conservancy Days programs are free and open to children and families (children under 8 years old must be accompanied by an adult.) Pre-registration is NOT required. Meeting place: Orchid Heights Park, Middleton except Universe in the Park. Find updates online at [www.pheasantbranch.org](http://www.pheasantbranch.org) or call 608-231-6035 or email [education@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:education@pheasantbranch.org) for more information and to RSVP.**

### PEAK with REI and Leave No Trace

Thursday, May 21, 2009; 6:00 – 7:30 pm  
RSVPs appreciated for this event - [education@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:education@pheasantbranch.org)

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. A hands-on, interactive program on camping and Leave No Trace principles. Make sure you and your children learn how to have



**The Friends are pleased to offer free family activities all summer long. Visit [pheasantbranch.org](http://pheasantbranch.org) for more info.**

fun outside in an environmentally responsible way and have lots of fun in the process!

### Amphibian Fun

Thursday, June 18, 2009; 8:00 – 9:30 pm

There are NEW features for this 2009 program, so even if you came last year, come enjoy this celebration of summer again! Explore frog songs and colors, myths and marvels. Someone may even get to turn into a frog for the evening! Don't worry, we won't slime you! Come and listen, look, feel, and learn about these critters from the conservancy's wet spaces.

### Night Hike and Discovery

Thursday, July 16, 2009; 8:30 – 10:00 pm

By the light of a half-full moon, explore the conservancy and yourself (your senses and sensitivities) in a new light.

### Universe in the Park

Thursday, August 20, 2009; 8:30 – 10:00 pm

An annual favorite that we ask for pleasant weather and clear skies to enjoy! Come and peak into space with UW Astronomy staff. Telescopes and stellar door prizes included! NOTE: Meet at the northern most conservancy entrance off of Pheasant Branch Road in Middleton (this entrance is NOT at the top of a hill).

## June 10th Watershed Walk

Join us Wednesday, June 10th, 6:30 pm for a Watershed Walk. This series of walks explore natural areas within the Upper Yahara River Watershed and beyond. Meet at the Highland Way entrance. Follow east on Century Avenue towards Allen Blvd. After Allen Blvd, turn left at the first stoplight at Highland Way. Proceed to gate on the left. Parking is available along Highland Way. Friends board member Janet Kane will provide an overview of the new management plan for the Community Forest and discuss water quality in the conservancy. Learn more at: [www.benedictinewomen.org](http://www.benedictinewomen.org).

## Adopt-a-Plot is Easy

The Adopt-a-Plot program continues to grow. If you, your family, friends, neighbors or organization would like to care for a specific area of the conservancy, contact us for details. You can tend your plot a couple times a year, month, week or whenever you time have to so. Busy people find this a good way to give back to a place they enjoy and use as you can work on your own after some guidance from the FOPB. Your only obligation is to report when you worked and what you did. Contact Susan Gruber at [office@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:office@pheasantbranch.org), [Sgruber42@hotmail.com](mailto:Sgruber42@hotmail.com), or 836-3848.



# GET OUT THERE: Field Trips & Volunteer Opportunities

## Restoration & Management Update

By Susan Gruber

Things are happening! Have you noticed the dredging of the detention ponds on the west side of the conservancy? Have you noticed the clearing of the dogwood and other plants to the east of the creek? Have you noticed the flume is repaired?



**Youthful hands assist clearing reed canary grass from springs.**

The ponds were nearly full of sediment trapped over the last 5 years from the runoff north of the conservancy. As of this writing the County, with help from the DNR, dredged out hundreds of cubic yards of wet, sloppy sediments and stockpiled them in a relatively flat location to dry out enough for transportation to another location. The ponds are now a good 5 feet deeper in the middle to trap sediment containing phosphorus, nitrogen, and organic waste and prevent it from washing into the marsh and eventually Lake Mendota.

More red-osier dogwood and honeysuckle shrubs were cleared this winter when the ground was frozen in order to improve the sedge meadow wetland east of the springs. There is now continuous grassy habitat for birds that use both the upland prairies and the sedge meadow wetlands. Grassland birds as a group are suffering declines in numbers nationwide, which concerns conservation biologists; but sedge Wrens have already benefited from clearing shrubs out of the middle zone between the big springs and the old Frederick's homesite. The extensive amount of prairie restoration in the County park has already paid off by providing habitat used by Dickcissels, Mead-

owlarks, and several different Sparrows.

The flume that measures the flow of water from the springs, tracking the effect of development on groundwater, has been seeping on and off for many months. Thanks to the continuous repairs done by Herb Garn and Guerdon Coombs, the leaks appear to be fixed....at least for the moment. A small group of volunteers monitor the flow through the flume twice a month. You might see them out there in their waders with their eyes at water level to see what the gauge reads.

Our new adventure for the summer is joining the Prairie Partner Internship Program. We will be one of 5 groups working together to support 5 interns for 12 weeks, 8 hours a day! That is the equivalent of 60 days or 480 hours of work from these interns. They will spend Wednesdays at the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. We will be working with County staff on a variety of projects. We have high expectations of what can be accomplished with these young people. Other volunteers will be needed to work with the interns beginning on Wednesday, June 17th. If you can be a regular volunteer, please contact Susan Gruber at [office@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:office@pheasantbranch.org), [sgruber42@hotmail.com](mailto:sgruber42@hotmail.com), or 836-3848. Your help is desperately needed!

**See the sidebar (right) for regularly scheduled volunteer work parties.**

## Summer Work Parties

**Thursdays 9:00 am - noon:**

June 4th, July 2nd, August 6th, September 3rd

**Saturdays 9:00 am - noon:**

May 16th, June 20th, July 18th, August 15th, September 19th

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. If you are NOT on our "Prairie" email list to receive a reminder of work sessions, please contact Susan Gruber at [office@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:office@pheasantbranch.org), [sgruber42@hotmail.com](mailto:sgruber42@hotmail.com), or 836-3848 to be added to our email list. Additional work days are periodically scheduled. 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, July 11, 10 am – 11 am**

**Meet on top of Fredrick's Knoll**

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 "Eight Actions of Qi" qigong. This is a great way to appreciate nature in the exuberance of summer. For more information contact Julia Riley, [qiworks@tds.net](mailto:qiworks@tds.net), or call 833-2520.

You Can Make a Difference . . .



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

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Middleton WI

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**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.

Free and Fun Family Programs  
all summer long!  
See page 6 inside . . .

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email. Thank you.

Middleton, WI 53562-8242

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Summer 2009