



Geneva Lake Conservancy Connections

Protecting the environmental character of the Geneva Lakes area

Summer 2015

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Letter from the Chairman

Colman Woods, the Geneva Lake Conservancy’s latest conservation easement, represents a magnificent woodland area in the process of restoration.

Colman Woods is 28 acres in size and lies within 2000 feet of Geneva Lake. Six types of mammals inhabit the property including red fox and white-tail deer. There are 26 bird species including too many turkeys and five types of woodpeckers, most notably the pileated woodpecker. There are 181 native species of plants and trees, many which only occur in very healthy woodland areas—it’s special!

The woods need restoration because the trees are old, many with oak wilt or the emerald ash borer. Young trees have not grown because of lack of light due to invasive species such as garlic mustard, ivy vines covering the trees, honeysuckle and Norway maples. The other barrier to the woods’ renewal is the large population of deer that eats the young oak saplings.

In the restoration process, woods are opened up by cutting ivy vines, removing dead trees and cutting maples, taking out invasive plants and simply cleaning up and burning the debris. The forest floor was burned three times, which helps control the spread of the ivy vines and garlic mustard. What happens when you burn a woodland forest floor is amazing! Up pop plants and flowers you never knew existed. Woodland nodding trillium emerge. So do bellwort, shooting stars and wild geranium as well as more May apples and jack-in-the-pulpit than you can imagine. Lastly, tree tubes are used to protect the oak saplings from the deer until the trees are big enough to survive. It’s a big job that never really ends!

Why an easement? I put my property into a conservation easement with the GLC to protect it from development and to encourage its continued evolution as a protected natural area. The easement allows a house zone with one house and paths for viewing the flora and fauna. It is a fulfilling project full of surprises and lots of hard work but, hopefully, will last for future generations to enjoy.

Respectfully,

Charles L. Colman

(For details on the Colman Woods Walkabout, check the Conservancy’s website, www.GenevaLakeConservancy.org, or contact the Conservancy at 262-275-5700 for details.)

Proposed DNR Plan for the Big Foot Beach State Park

A proposed DNR plan for the Big Foot Beach State Park has been headline news for the past months. While some aspects of the proposed plan have been controversial, such as moving the placement of the road to the east of the lagoon from its current position to the west of the lagoon, other aspects have been well received, such as enhancements to the beach and concerns for pedestrian safety.

Wanting to gather appropriate information, prior to formulating a Conservancy position relative to this proposed plan, representatives of the Conservancy attended a number of informational meetings and also spoke directly with representatives of the DNR. Based on the information we have gathered, the Conservancy's concerns relative to this proposal, or for that matter any park plan, revolve around the environmental impact of the project, boat traffic at the east end of Geneva Lake, and budget issues.

Environmental impact must be a significant consideration. Tree cutting must be minimized. An assessment of the wetlands and water flows would be needed to ensure clean water flow through the park into the lake. Natural water flow would need to be facilitated, not blocked. Any construction or reconstruction on the property should not add to sediment loads into the lake, the lagoon, or any of the park's wetlands.

Any channel connecting the lagoon would be problematic as it is likely to result in increased boat traffic on the lake and present potential safety issues for swimmers or users of the beach area. In addition, such a channel could allow lagoon sediment to flush into the lake.

Any plan for the park must take into consideration the required budget monies (personnel, routine maintenance) needed to maintain the park for years to come.

Moving ahead with the current proposed DNR plan or any other plan, without addressing the above issues, particularly the environmental aspects, is the Conservancy's concern.

We will continue to monitor any proposed plans for the Big Foot Beach State Park and will keep you, our supporters, advised.

Little Free Library at GLC



Look for a new addition to the fence in front of the Mill House. A Little Free Library is located just to the south of the entrance walkway. The concept of the Little Free Library is "take a book, return a book". Our Little Free Library is stocked with books that deal with green issues, such as Aldo Leopold's Sand County Almanac. Check out the library, and check out a book! The sturdy green library is made possible through a donation by Bob and Jane Klockars. Come visit, take a book, return a book and watch our library grow!

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2015 Spring Luncheon

By Jade Bolack

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For Mark Hirsch, it was just about a tree. At least in the beginning.

Hirsch, who took a photo of a tree about two miles from his home every day for a year, said the idea was to start a photo-a-day project while he was recovering from an auto accident.

Hirsch spoke to the Geneva Lake Conservancy on Friday, April 17, at Pier 290 in Williams Bay about career changes, tragic accidents and the tree that changed his life.

"I always thought you had to travel the world to see beautiful things," Hirsch said. "It's not true. Beauty is hiding, waiting to be discovered in our backyards."

"In 2012, I got my first iPhone," Hirsch said.

Hirsch said he posted about the phone online, and one of his friends said, "Isn't the camera great?"

"I responded, no I got a phone, not a camera," he said. "My friend told me to treat the phone like a camera, so I did. The first photo I made was of that tree."

Hirsch said photography is his business, not his hobby, and he never took photos to satisfy himself. Until a friend suggested a photo-a-day project.

"So, I started it," he said. "I had two roadblocks. I was taking too many sunrise and sunset photos, and I hadn't consulted with my family."

Hirsch said he often left the dinner table when the sky turned the right color to drive to the tree for a photo.

"My wife thought I was crazy," he said.

That Tree, an at least 185-year-old bur oak, is a sole tree in the middle of acres of cornfields.

"It's remarkable that the tree is there," Hirsch said. "When I first started this project, I thought it was just a tree in a cornfield. But it's not just that. It's an oasis of life."



Left, That Tree, Day 297, December 27. Right, Mark Hirsch, who said that "Trees resonate deeply in the souls of millions of people. As a photographer and a person, That Tree spoke to me. She spoke of patience and dedication, hidden beauty and personal healing."



CONNECTIONS Summer photo, by Jim Frost, is a red winged blackbird flying over a wet land at Kiswaukétoe.

GLC Donates "That Tree" to Area Libraries

To celebrate Earth Day, six area libraries received a donation from GLC of "That Tree: An iPhone Journal Documenting a Year in the Life of a Lonely Bur Oak" by Mark Hirsch.. "That Tree" was donated to Aram Public Library, Barrett Memorial Library, Lake Geneva Public Library, Matheson Memorial Library, Village of Fontana Library, and Walworth Memorial Library.



Geneva Lake Conservancy

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Upcoming Events

Ticket Purchase Required except for KNC's 25th Anniv.

Thursday, July 2

Colman Woods Walkabout

Saturday, July 18

*Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy's 25th
Anniversary*

Saturday, October 3

Shore Path Walk

Sunday, October 11

*"Landscape Architecture at Lake Geneva: The
Work of Jens Jensen"*

Saturday, December 5

Holly Ball

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www.GenevaLakeConservancy.org