



Geneva Lake  
Conservancy

# Connections

Preserve and advocate for Walworth County waterways, natural areas, and working lands

Summer 2018

## JACOBSEN/STEVENS DONATION KICKS OFF GLC OAK RECOVERY PROGRAM

This spring, the Geneva Lake Conservancy received a generous donation of a 4.3 acre oak forest with 105 feet of shoreline on Lake Delavan from the Ken Jacobsen Family Trust that will be known as the “Stevens Family Land Trust.”



*The 4.3 acre Stevens Family Land Trust parcel is the GLC's new protected property.*

The property is adjacent to an existing 7-acre conservation easement held by the Conservancy. The Stevens property along with the easement protect more than 10 acres of oak forest in a Primary Environmental Corridor. Five different species of woodpeckers use the forest as their home, including the red-headed woodpecker, which is a species of concern in Wisconsin.

“We are very grateful to Ken Jacobsen and his family for this wonderful gift to the Conservancy that will forever protect this forest as habitat for birds and other wildlife,” said Dennis Jordan, Conservancy chairman.

### Oaks part of Stevens family history

The property has been owned by the Stevens family for more than a century. Mr. Jacobsen and his late wife Katherine Stevens Jacobsen wanted to ensure that it was protected into perpetuity as wildlife habitat, Jordan said.

The property is part of Windward Hills, an estate that was purchased by Katharine's grandfather who was the founder of the Charles A. Stevens Department stores in Chicago. The entire 24-acre estate has an interesting history and was once owned by Roswell Mason, Chicago Mayor during the city's fire of 1871. (see page 4)

The estate's woodland contains a variety of red and white oaks, hickories and maples. It is an oak forest remnant, part of the oak forests that once covered much of this area.

“This important donation sets the stage for the Conservancy's new Oak Ecosystem Recovery Program, which seeks to protect our remaining oak forests and to begin restoring the oak woodlands, forests and savannas, which once covered Walworth County,” said Jordan.

Cont. on page 5

# NEW GLC PROGRAM HELPS REDUCE PHOSPHORUS POLLUTION

Last year, Geneva Lake experienced its worst algae bloom in 40 years and nine new waterways in Walworth County were added to the Environmental Protection Agency's list of Impaired Waters.

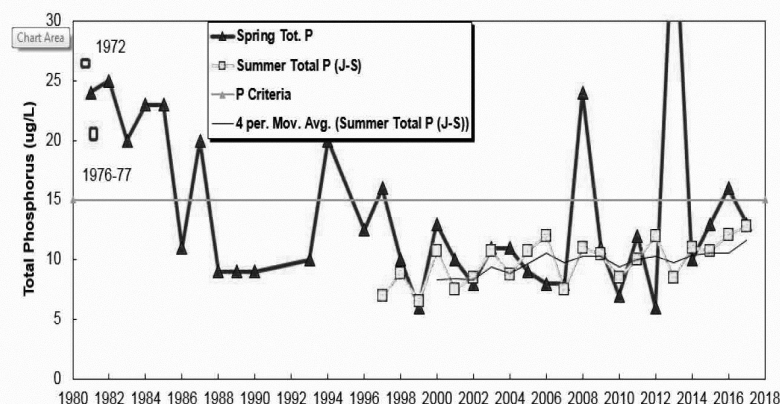
The GLC is taking action. This fall, the GLC met with some of its partners, including Michael Field's Agricultural Institute, Geneva Lake Environmental Agency (GLEA) and Walworth County officials to discuss how to begin reducing phosphorus levels in the county's lakes and streams.

Algae blooms are caused by excessive phosphorus in lake water and sediments. The sources of this phosphorus are runoff from residential, commercial and agricultural properties. Algae blooms endanger the health of aquatic life, can cause serious health problems in humans and pets, and make a lake or other waterway unsafe for swimming and other recreational activities.

Geneva Lake currently meets the phosphorus water quality standard of below 0.015 mg/l as established by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for its defined water quality objective. Other Walworth County lakes and streams that did not meet this phosphorus standard or are listed on the EPA's Impaired Waters list for other pollutants include: Whitewater Lake, Lake Lorraine, Potter Lake, Delavan Lake and some segments of the White River, Turtle Creek, Jackson Creek, Honey Creek and Sugar Creek.

"Within the last 23 years, in-lake spring total phosphorus values have shown an upward trend," said Ted Peters of the GLEA.

Total phosphorus, and WI DNR\* recommended total phosphorus standard for Geneva Lake, WI.  
Source: Dale Robertson, U.S. Geological Survey, Personal Communication Jan. 23, 2018.



\*According to Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 102.06 (2)(i) Geneva Lake is designated as a "stratified two-story fishery lake within the Fish and Aquatic Life (FAL) use category. As defined in Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 102.06 (4) (b)1, a stratified two-story fishery lake is a stratified lake which has supported a cold-water fishery in its lower depths within the last 50 years. The recommended WI DNR phosphorus water quality standard for Geneva Lake is 15 ug/l. (WI DNR 2017).

The GLC and GLEA will work with local municipalities to tighten existing ordinances and enact new regulations to reduce phosphorus runoff.

To lower phosphorus levels, property owners can:

- Prevent leaves, lawn clippings and other lawn waste, which are high in phosphorus, from entering the lake.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of fertilizers and lawn chemicals, which may contain phosphorus, nitrogen and other chemicals that encourage algae growth. Don't water a lawn after applying fertilizers.

- Prevent soil erosion by planting native plants along the shore of lakes and streams that will filter pollutants before they reach the water.
- Monitor construction sites to prevent soil and other runoff into the lake.

Cont. on page 6



## EXCELLENT SUMMER READS

The GLC staff recommends the following books that have ties to Walworth County or conservation:

***Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman*** by Miriam Horn (W.W. Norton and Company, \$16.95) This book profiles conservation heroes of the American Heartland's Mississippi River Watershed, which includes Walworth County. Of particular interest is the profile of Justin Knopf, a Kansas farmer, whose family has farmed his land since 1868. This chapter describes changes in farming practices over the centuries and how they have impacted the watershed. A modern rancher and a fisherman also discuss how adopting conservation practices is helping to sustain their lifestyles.

***Along the Shore Path, Childhood Summers at the Lake*** by Chris Brownstein (New Lands Press, \$11.95) The author chronicles her adventures as a child along the wilder north shore of Geneva Lake, where summers were slower, freer and filled with surprises. From picking apples and berries in the woods to witnessing foxes displaced by development, you will share in Brownstein's memories of the months where a summer at the lake meant exploring the natural world.

***Bringing Nature Home*** by Douglas Tallamy (Timberpress, Inc. \$15.95) As development and habitat destruction accelerate, there are increasing pressures on wildlife. But everyone with a patch of earth can make a significant contribution to helping wildlife populations by planting some of the native plants recommended in this book.

### GLC Sustaining Sponsors

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## KIERA THEYS JOINS GLC

Kiera Theys, a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, will be joining the GLC team as a summer intern beginning this May.

Kiera is an environmental science major and will be assisting the GLC in its membership and community outreach activities. She has spent time doing research in Yellowstone National Park and is a member of the University's fishing team.

Kiera lives in Des Plaines, Illinois, and her family has a summer home in Lake Geneva. Please join us in welcoming Kiera.



## VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

**July 20, Friday**—Sponsored by Walworth County. White River County Park Work Day, "Summer Park Improvement"  
9 am—noon

**October 19, Friday**—Sponsored by Walworth County. White River County Park Work Day, 9 am—noon

**See GLC website for registration details**

For information on Kishwaukétoe Nature Conservancy Volunteer Workdays go to:  
[www.friendsofknc.org](http://www.friendsofknc.org)

CONNECTIONS Winter photo by Jim Frost. Special thanks to Jim for his assistance with photographs.

## The Stevens Family Land History, 1901-2018

In 1901 Charles A. Stevens, a Chicago merchant, bought the property on the North Shore of Lake Delavan that now includes the Stevens Family Land Trust. The property had had several previous owners including the family of Roswell Mason, mayor of Chicago during the 1871 fire.

The one existing house on the property in 1901, a large chalet down by the lake, served as a family summer retreat for many years, and has now been replaced by a year-round home.

In 1901 Charles Stevens also built a Gardener's Cottage, with a windmill-driven water tower (the house, designed by Robert Spencer, an associate of Frank Lloyd Wright, still stands, but the windmill is no more), where caretakers lived as they tended the extensive flower and vegetable gardens on the west side of the property, and cared for livestock and a small herd of Toggenburg goats. In recent years the Cottage has been the residence of Ken Jacobsen, along with his wife Katharine Stevens Jacobsen, who died in 2017.

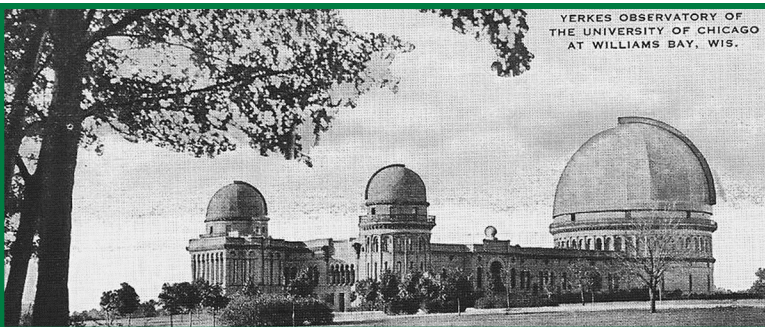


In 1935 Charles' son Elmer and wife Harriet built "Windward", one of the early modular homes they had seen on display at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, which then served as the year-round family home for their daughters Katharine, Carol and Gail. Carol still lives in the house today.

For over a century, the Stevens property, now known as Windward Hills--its woodlands and fields, houses and a common dock on the lake--has served as a summer gathering place (with a tennis court, sailing on the lake, and for some years, a camp for Chicago children), and friends still visit in all seasons to enjoy the land and the lake.

While the gardens on the west side of the Stevens property mostly reverted to woodland from the 1950's on, the east side has always been and remains oak forest down to the lake. Many creatures frequent the forest and shore including deer, foxes, flying squirrels, red-tailed hawks, pileated woodpeckers, muskrats, blue herons, and wood ducks. Native plants include jack in the pulpit, trillium, and abundant bluebells in the spring.

A significant portion of the forest from North Shore Drive down a ravine to the lake shore will now be protected in its natural state under the Geneva Lake Conservancy as the Stevens Family Land Trust.



**Principal Sponsor**  
**GLC summer event at**  
**Yerkes July 15**

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WEALTH MANAGEMENT

## Jacobsen/Stevens Donation (cont. from page 1)

### GLC Oak Recovery Program begins

The Conservancy program is part of the Morton Arboretum/Chicago Wilderness Oak Ecosystem Recovery Plan. As part of the plan, an oak mapping of Walworth County was recently completed, which shows both the original oak forests and remnants of these forests that are still present today. The study determined that less than 17 percent of Walworth County's original oak forests and savannas remain.

More than 500 species depend on oak trees for their existence, according to Ed Collins, Director of Land Preservation & Natural Resources for the McHenry County Conservation District, who spoke at the Conservancy's April 20 Earth Day luncheon.

"If there is a single lesson that can be drawn from the oak study, it is that even the smallest grove of oaks matter," said Collins.

Scientific information like the oak study provide the statistical data necessary to identify many of the issues facing the remaining oak groves in our region, according to Collins.

### Oak trees define landscape

"What it cannot do is quantify the importance and meaning that these trees have played and continue to play in the lives of the county's citizens," Collins said. "We are the people of the oaks . . . they are a daily feature in our lives."

This fall, the Conservancy is holding its first native oak tree sale to begin repopulating the county's oak trees. All the trees are sourced from a nearby nursery, which grows oaks from local acorns, ensuring the best saplings for growth in Walworth County.

The Conservancy will also be offering an educational hike of the new Stevens Family Land Trust property this fall. More details will sent to Conservancy members this summer.

### GLC Oak Tree Order Form- Deadline for ordering is July 15

**Proceeds will benefit the restoration of GLC's Hansen Preserve.**

Please indicate the number of each tree you would like to purchase below. (Trees will come with planting instructions and oak tree care tips.)

**All trees in 5 gallon pots are \$75.00. Trees grown in 7 gallon pots are \$95.00.**

\_\_\_\_\_ 5 Gal Swamp White Oak. (Prefers acidic, moist, well-drained soils. Height at maturity: 50-60')

\_\_\_\_\_ 5 Gal Bur Oak (Prefers dry, alkaline soils that are well drained. Height at maturity: 70-80')

\_\_\_\_\_ 7 Gal Bur Oak (Prefers dry, alkaline soils that are well drained: Height at maturity: 70-80')

**Both Species provide superior benefits to wildlife, require at least 6 hours of direct sunlight per day, and are tolerant of both drought and poor drainage.**

All trees can be picked up at the Geneva Lake Conservancy garage, 398 Mill Street, Fontana, WI between September 17 and September 28.

You may order from our Web site or send your check made out to the Geneva Lake Conservancy and this form to PO BOX 588, Fontana, WI 53125. For questions, call Bob Nordhaus at 262-949-1185.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Check amount: \_\_\_\_\_



## GLC Phosphorus Program (cont. from page 2)

- Refuse to contract with lawn care companies that blow, rake or dump leaves and yard waste into the lake. Report those that do to the GLC.
- Reduce disturbance of lake bottoms. Sediment contains years of phosphorus build-up and, when disturbed, releases phosphorus into the lake.
- Avoid washing cars, boats or pets near the lake and bathing or shampooing in the lake.
- Add more pervious surfaces to land that allow water to seep into the ground. Use gravel, or brick for driveways and paver stones rather than cement walkways.

The GLC is also working with its partners and farmers to develop a pilot program to reduce agricultural runoff.

If you are interested in helping with our Phosphorus Reduction Program by serving as a volunteer, contact the GLC at 262-275-5700.



*Gathering Waters Executive Director Mike Carlson, GLC Executive Director Karen Yancey and GLC Board Member Chris Danou met with Wisconsin legislators in Washington D.C. this April to ask for their support for conservation programs in the Farm Bill as well as legislation to protect abuse of conservation easements.*

**Thank You to our many volunteers who enable us to preserve and protect open space!**

## HANSEN PRESERVE TO OPEN JULY 1.

There is a lot of excitement at the GLC this summer due to the opening of the 77-acre Hansen Preserve on Sugar Creek, just north of Elkhorn, for public hiking, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, hunting and other recreational activities.

The preserve will officially open July 1. It will feature almost a mile hike along the creek, which ends in an upland oak opening. Along the trail, hikers will see a variety of landscapes, native plants and wildlife. There are several places to launch a canoe or kayak and fishing sites are available all along the creek. Sugar Creek is designated as a Class II trout stream.

Hunting and trapping are also allowed on the preserve and hunters and trappers must register online on the GLC Website beginning September 1. Please honor the boundary markers on the site and do not trespass on adjoining private property.

The GLC thanks the DNR Knowles Nelson Stewardship grant, Ducks Unlimited and GLC private donors who provided the funding to purchase the Hansen Preserve.

To reach the preserve, take Highway 12 to Abell Corners and turn east on Highway ES. The preserve is just east of the second bridge and marked by a GLC sign. Parking is available along Highway ES.



## HELEN ROHNER CHILDREN'S FISHING PARK OPENS JUNE 3

More than 200 people attended the dedication of the Helen Rohner Children's Fishing Park on Sunday, June 3.

The park is located on Highway 67 in Williams Bay directly south of the entrance to Kishwaukétoe Nature Conservancy. The park was donated by Jack Rohner in memory of his late wife, Helen. It features fishing areas for children along Southwick Creek, which is a trout stream.

There is also a worm digging area, nature trail with Native American history, a story time area, natural playground, information about brown trout and a boardwalk into a wetland on the five-acre property. A handicapped fishing area is located on the south side of the property.



*Members of the GLC board recently visited our new Helen Rohner Children's Fishing Park and Hansen properties. Left to right: Dennis Jordan, Chris Danou with Ranger, Charles Colman, Don Parker and Kevin Brunner.*

Fishing and nature classes, as well as story times by the Barrett Memorial Library, will be offered this summer. (See below).

"We are so grateful to the Rohner family for making this park possible for the enjoyment of many generations of children," said Karen Yancey, GLC Executive Director. "They have allowed us to take a blighted five-acre property in the center of the village and restore its native landscape for the benefit of the children in the community."

In addition, many local community organizations have provided funds and volunteer time to create the park.



*The Lake Geneva Rotary Club planted 20 native oak trees and shrubs at Helen Rohner Children's Fishing Park.*

The Williams Bay Lions Club provided funding for the boardwalk, the Lake Geneva Fishing Club has donated the worm digging area, fishing poles and other supplies. The Lake Geneva Rotary Club planted native oak trees on the site and Boy Scout Troop 235 are building benches and bird houses for the park. Thanks also go to the Friends of Kishwaukétoe and the Village of Williams Bay for their support. A grant for the park was also provided by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.



An amphibian pond and nature center are planned for Phase II of the park, which will begin this fall.

### HELEN ROHNER CHILDREN'S FISHING PARK SUMMER NATURE CLASSES

**FISHING LESSONS**—Tuesdays, June 5, 12, 16 & 26—Volunteers from the Lake Geneva Fishing Club will be teaching children how to fish for trout. Various bait will be discussed, children will dig for worms and there will be time for all children to fish in Southwick Creek. 1:30—2:30 p.m. AGES 5-12

**STORY TIME**—Thursdays, June 7, 14, & 21—Join us for Story Time with the librarians from the Barrett Memorial Library under The Thinking Spot, our new storytelling area under a walnut tree. You will sit on logs as you listen to stories about fish, birds and nature. 1:30—2p.m. AGES 3-10



# Geneva Lake Conservancy

Our mission is to preserve and advocate for Walworth County  
waterways, natural areas and working lands.

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**SAVE THE DATE FOR  
GLC'S SUMMER EVENT!**

**Sunday, July 15 at  
YERKES OBSERVATORY**

**Tour the Grounds on Foot or  
via Golf cart, Enjoy Cocktails,  
Dinner and Stargazing while  
supporting GLC!**

Geneva Lake Conservancy • 398 Mill Street • Fontana, WI 53125 • 262 275 5700 • 262 275 0579 fax

[www.GenevaLakeConservancy.org](http://www.GenevaLakeConservancy.org)