



Geneva Lake Conservancy **Connections**

Preserve and advocate for Walworth County waterways, natural areas, and working lands Summer 2019

SAVING OAKS IS FOCUS OF NEW CONSERVANCY PROGRAM

Beautiful old oak trees are not only inspiring to behold, they serve as habitat for more than 500 species of wildlife, from eagles to endangered birds and many types of mammals and insects.

Today, according to a study completed by the Morton Arboretum, less than 17 percent of the oak forests and savannas that once covered Walworth County remain. Even these trees are threatened by development, disease and an inability to regenerate due to the lawns and invasive species, like buckthorn, that make it difficult for young trees to survive.

“Oak savannas, which were the predominant feature on the landscape before European settlement, have become a rare landscape on the planet,” said Ross Alexander, Ph.D. who heads the Chicago Wilderness/Morton Arboretum Oak Ecosystem Recovery Program.

To address this conservation need, the Geneva Lake Conservancy is introducing an Oak Recovery Program. The program is generously funded by a donation from the Griffith Family Foundation. The 2019 program will include:

- Introducing a Heritage Oaks contest to identify and recognize the oldest and most beautiful oak trees in the county and provide consulting services to help landowners care for these trees.
- Planting more than 100 oak trees each year on public properties, nature preserves and conservation easement properties.
- Selling oak trees grown by native acorns to plant on private properties.



Majestic oaks framing a country farm house are no long a common site. The Conservancy's Heritage Oak Program hopes to highlight the beauty and stability that oaks provided to our natural landscape.

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HACKMATACK WILDLIFE REFUGE IS TOP CONSERVANCY PRIORITY

The southern part of Walworth County has become a strategic focus of the Geneva Lake Conservancy as our organization works to add more protected land to the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 2012.

The bi-state preserve, which also includes parts of McHenry County, Illinois, contains lands that are important wildlife habitat and also need to be protected for migratory birds, said Cathy Nigg, USFWS refuge area supervisor in the Midwest Region.

The Geneva Lake Conservancy worked with the USFWS recently to begin a land protection project that is just a few miles outside Hackmatack's boundaries in Walworth County. The property features several high quality wetlands. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is now partnering with USFWS to take steps to purchase the property.

Walworth County's wetlands are exceptionally valuable because they are used by migratory birds along the Mississippi flyway, said Nigg.

Walworth County is important to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service not only as a core area of the Hackmatack refuge, but also as a key county in the Leopold Wetland Management District, said Nigg.

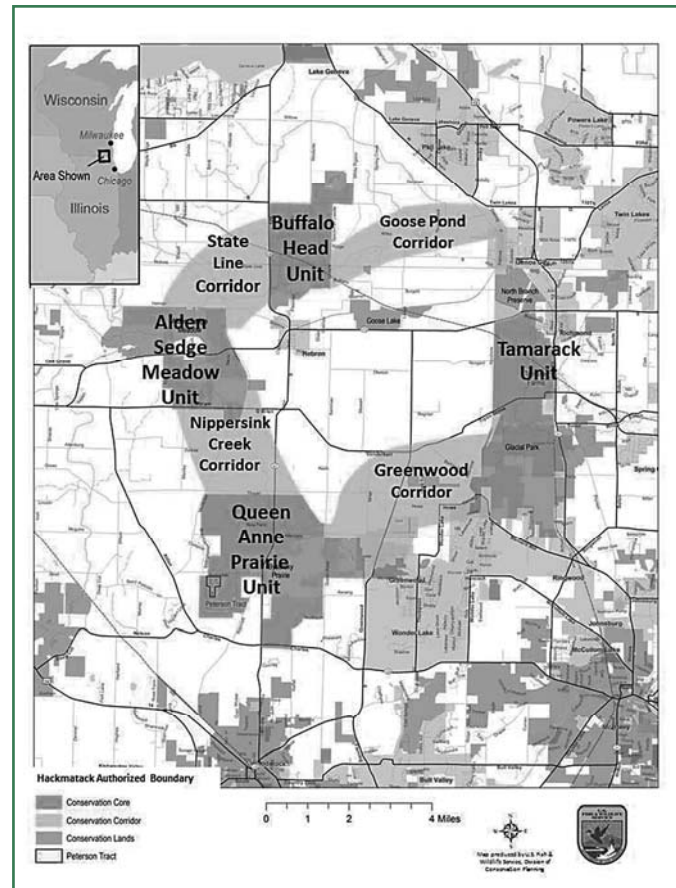
The Leopold Wetland Management District's goals are to preserve, restore and enhance the ecological diversity of wetlands, grasslands and native flora to support the conservation of breeding habitat for waterfowl, grassland birds and other wildlife. The USFWS has an interest in restoring wetlands and may be interested in purchasing lands depending on available funding, said Todd Boonstra, the new Hackmatack manager for USFWS.

Peterkin Pond off Highway B south of Geneva Lake, owned by the DNR, is located on the Hackmatack's northern boundary and is used by hundreds of sandhill cranes in the spring and fall as a migratory stopping place. The property can be accessed for wildlife viewing along a walking easement off Highway B.

"We want to add more protected wetlands like Peterkin Pond to the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge," Boonstra said.

The Geneva Lake Conservancy will be meeting with interested property owners within the Hackmatack boundaries over the next few months to discuss the different land protection tools it can offer.

"By 2021, we hope to have even more properties within the Hackmatack boundary protected for the benefit of wildlife and our local environment," said Kevin Brunner, GLC Chairman.



A peaceful moment overlooking Peterkin Pond.

YOGA IN THE YARD AT THE REFURBISHED MILL HOUSE

If you are in Fontana this summer, we hope you will stop by the Conservancy office at 398 Mill Street to see our refurbished offices. We've painted and repaired rotten wood on the outside of our building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We have added a pollinator garden with educational signs and bird feeders. A new purple martin house will be installed later this year. A ice cream shop has opened across the street and there is a new picnic table in our yard where you can sit and eat your ice cream while enjoying nature.



Beginning Friday, July 19 yoga classes will be held on our front lawn from 8:30 to 9:45 a.m. on Fridays. The instructor is Suzette Rowe and a \$20 donation is requested. The classes also will be held on July 26, August 2 and August 9. Afterwards, enjoy a coffee at the Coffee Mill across the street.

Please register in advance at www.genevalakeconservancy.org. Bring your own yoga mat.

KEEPING IT BLUE

More than 70 lakefront property owners, lake management district members, farmers, municipal officials and concerned citizens attended the May 31 'Keeping It Blue' seminar sponsored by the Geneva Lake Conservancy, Geneva Lake Environmental Agency and Walworth County Conservation Office.

Participants heard from Todd Ambs, the assistant deputy secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on water issues around the state. Dale Robertson from the U.S. Geological Survey provided data on current phosphorus levels in Walworth County lakes. Fay Amerson and Shannon Haydin from the Walworth County Conservation Office provided some solutions to abate phosphorus runoff. Their colleague Brian Smetana and farmer Adam Lasch addressed agricultural runoff. Theresa



Stegemann provided a homeowner's model for reducing pollutants and Ted Peters of the Geneva Lake Environmental Agency provided a case study of Geneva Lake.

Interested participants were asked to sign up to be part of Healthy Lakes grants that the Conservancy will be applying for this fall. The Conservancy's Phosphorus Reduction Initiative is being sponsored by The Richard H. Driehaus Charitable Lead Trust, Simms Family Foundation and Kikkoman Food Foundation.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Thursday, September 12—Presentation on Environmental Impact of Foxconn
- Saturday, September 14—Seed picking with Kettle Moraine Land Trust at Hackmatack's Turner Track
- Thursday, September 26—Fall Fundraiser "Crazy about Cranes"
- Saturday, December 7—GLC Annual Meeting
- Saturday, December 7—Holly Ball

CONSERVANCY OAK PROGRAM (Continued from page 1)

* Protecting Walworth County's remnant oak forests by encouraging private property owners with oak forests and oak savannas to work with the Conservancy to protect them with conservation easements, land donations or land purchases.

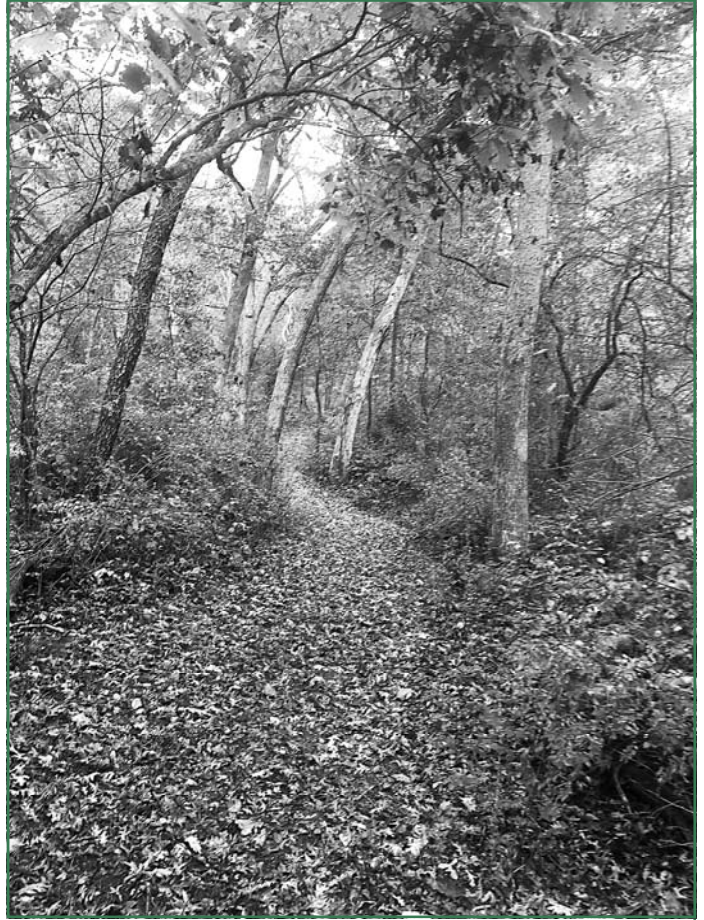
In 2018, the Geneva Lake Conservancy received a donation of a 5-acre oak forest on Lake Delavan known as the Stevens Family Land Trust and also completed a 79-acre conservation easement on a remnant oak forest owned by the Yggdrasil Land Foundation in the Town of Troy.

This year, the Conservancy plans to complete the purchase of 32-acre oak forest and kettle pond in the Town of LaGrange. In addition, a conservation easement will be placed on an oak savanna adjacent to the forest. The Conservancy has received a Knowles Nelson Stewardship grant for half of the purchase price and is raising the remaining funds through private donations.

There are also several high quality oak forests and savannas remaining in the southern part of Walworth County that are important to protect before they are lost to inappropriate development.

"We are talking with these landowners and encouraging them to work with us to ensure that these oak savannas and remnants of larger oak forests are protected," said Kevin Brunner, GLC Chairman.

The Conservancy provides information to landowners on how to care for oak trees as well as information on how to remove buckthorn, honeysuckle and other invasive species from oak areas and replace them with healthy native understory plants. For more information, contact the Conservancy at glc@genevalakeconservancy.org.



Did you know that Oaks provide:

- Habitat for 500 species of plants and animals
- Healthier soils
- Improved mental and physical health
- Reduced stormwater runoff
- Increased property values

Fun Facts:

- The age of an oak can be estimated by measuring its diameter.
- Oaks have evolved to live in our region.
- Don't water a mature oak unless there is drought.

"They are beautiful in their peace, They are wise in their silence, They will stand after we are dust, They teach us, and we tend them." G.A. MacDunelmor

HERITAGE OAK CONTEST ENTRY FORM

Enter one of three categories: Oldest Oak Tree, Most Beautiful Oak Tree, and Tree Associated with best story. Winners will be announced at the Conservancy Fall Fundraiser and receive a plaque and one hour free consultation from a tree expert on their oak tree.

Entries due by September 10

_____ Oldest Oak Tree—please provide age and circumference of the tree 3 feet from the ground

_____ Most Beautiful Oak Tree—please provide a digital photo of your tree

_____ Tree Associated with the best story— please share your tree's story in 500 hundred words or less

Name: _____ Email: _____

Cell phone: _____ Address of Tree's Location: _____

Person submitting entry must be owner of property on which tree is located or be entering a tree located on municipal or other public land. Thank you.

GLC Oak Tree Order Form - Deadline for ordering is August 15

Proceeds will benefit GLC's restoration efforts.

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 website 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: _____

Kettle Moraine Bird Festival & Spring Luncheon



On May 11, Craig Thompson, DNR Bureau of Natural Heritage, gave a presentation full of information and humor to an engaged audience of more than 60 people. The Bird Festival was held at Bromley Woods, LaGrange Township, and guests were led on guided bird walks by members of the Lakeland Audubon Society. Photos by Jim Frost.

Shining the Light on Hackmatack

Jerry Adelmann (below), president and CEO of Openlands, spoke about the potential of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge at the GLC's Summer Fundraiser on June 22 at the home of Sarah and John Cobb (John Cobb far right, Cobb home lower right). More than 120 people attended the event to support the GLC and learn more about the Hackmatack Refuge. During cocktail hour, a Bird of Prey presentation was made by Diane Moller, Hoo's Woods, featuring a bald eagle and eastern screech owl.



Photos by Victoria McHugh, Victoria McHugh Photography

AMPHIBIAN POND OPENS on July 5 at HELEN ROHNER CHILDREN'S FISHING PARK



Barbara Franke, daughter of Helen Rohner, and Jack Rohner, the husband of the late Helen Rohner, enjoy the Frog Lady presentation.



WELCOME GLC STAFF

Look for fresh faces at the Mill House and at Conservancy events!

Jodi Karow joined the staff at Geneva lake Conservancy as Bookkeeper in the spring of 2019. She brings with her over 20 years of bookkeeping experience as well as experience in fundraising and event planning. She is happy to be a part of the GLC team!

Jodi lives in Twin Lakes, WI with her husband Aaron, 3 children – Arianna (16), Brecken (11) and Nolan (8) and a one year old golden doodle, Cami. Jodi studied business & vocal performance at Illinois Wesleyan University and Carthage College. She enjoys spending time with family and friends, gardening, lazy lake days, decorating, singing and driving the kids to and from their activities.



A lifelong nature lover Mary Leaf has been designing GLC event graphics for the last five years. With a BFA in Visual Communications and an MBA from Northern Illinois University, she's now joined the Conservancy staff, assisting with all things administrative, including social media management. Happily transplanted to Linn Township for almost twenty years, Mary enjoys running and kayaking and live music with her three kids, who affectionately (and seriously) call her "The Brown Wizard", Tolkein's Middle-earth conjurer who protects and draws power from the birds and beasts and flora and fauna of the world.

Since 2013, Mary has been designing graphics for many of the Conservancy events as well as frequently volunteering.

Molly McGuire, the 2019 summer intern for the Geneva Lake Conservancy, just finished her first year of college at the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point. Majoring in Natural Resource Planning she an employee of the UW—Stevens Point Office of Sustainability and president of 350 Stevens Point, an organization that raises awareness and takes action on the climate crisis and other environmental issues. Molly believes that it is important to conserve our wildlife, waterways, and natural resources as well as making decisions that help the environment rather than damage it. This summer Molly will be managing the new Helen Rohner Children's fishing park, teaching environmental education classes, assisting in special events, and learning to monitor and report conservation easements.



CONNECTIONS Summer photo by Jim Frost. The background for the newsletter banner is ripples on the surface water of GLC's Hansen Preserve Property created by fish feeding on surface insects.

Special thanks to Jim for his assistance with photographs.



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



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Geneva Lake Conservancy

POLLINATOR HIKE PRAIRIE WALK

Sat. July 27 • 9am to 1pm

VISIT A NOTED DELAVAN LAKE POLLINATOR GARDEN AND GATHER INFORMATION FROM VENDORS ON CREATING YOUR OWN. THEN TOUR WHITE RIVER COUNTY PARK WHERE GUIDES WILL SHOW YOU AREAS OF THE PROPERTY'S 100-ACRE PRAIRIE RESTORATION.

REGISTER \$10 ONLINE

POLLINATOR GARDEN • 2916 KING ST • DELAVAN, WI

BARBEQUE PICNIC LUNCH

AVAILABLE FOR ADDITIONAL PURCHASE AT WHITE RIVER COUNTY PARK
6503 SHERIDAN SPRINGS RD • LAKE GENEVA, WI

\$10 REGISTRATION ONLINE • NO RAIN DATE • NO REFUNDS
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www.GenevaLakeConservancy.org