



# Geneva Lake Conservancy Connections



Summer 2021

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

## GENEVA LAKE CONSERVANCY PROTECTS 60 ACRES OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURAL LAND

The Geneva Lake Conservancy and the Yggdrasil Land Foundation have protected 60 acres of organic farm land in Walworth County with two conservation easements that ensure that this prime agricultural land is preserved in perpetuity.

The land includes two properties—the 40-acre Hart Farm and the 20-acre Grabowski Farm—located in Troy Township between Elkhorn and East Troy.

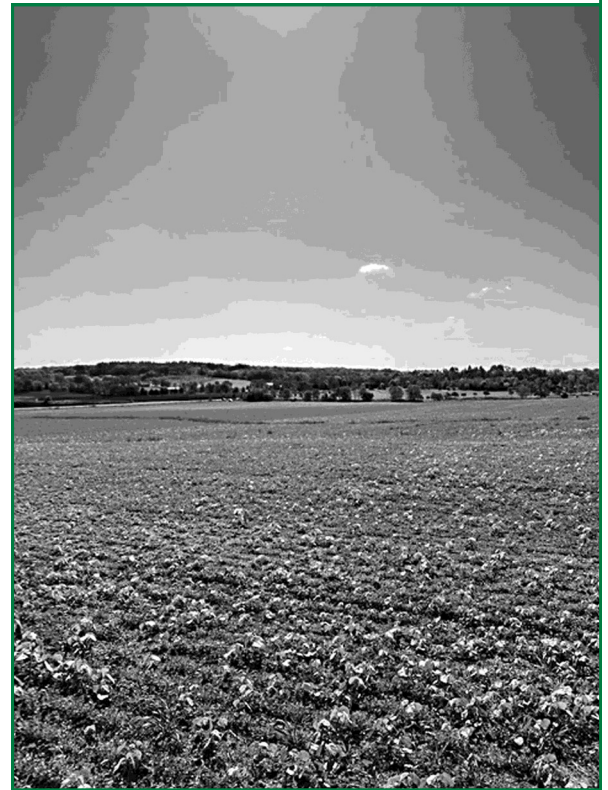
“As we step up our efforts to slow climate change, agricultural lands that are farmed with environmentally friendly practices are essential to absorb carbon, preserve healthy soil and add to the scenic beauty of Walworth County,” said Karen Yancey, GLC Executive Director.

The Conservancy has a long standing relationship with the Yggdrasil Land Foundation, which promotes biodynamic and organic farming practices and owns more than 1,224 acres in Walworth County, as well as agricultural land in California and New Hampshire. The Conservancy holds conservation easements on 927 acres of Yggdrasil land.

“As consumers demand for organic products increases, our biodynamic farm land and practices are particularly important to preserve and promote,” said Carol Andrews, Yggdrasil Land Foundation president. “It can take many years for organic agricultural land to become certified and free of the chemicals and pesticides that do so much harm to our environment and human health,” she said.

Although the farms are located in a Walworth County Farmland Preservation District, the district does not prevent these farms from being subdivided and developed in the future, Yancey said. They are both within a mile of a major highway and therefore, would be particularly vulnerable to subdivision without the conservation easement, she said.

Conservation easements are legal documents that are used to protect the conservation values of a property. In many cases, the conservation easements give the development rights of a property to a conservation organization and landowners can receive an income, estate or property tax deduction based on the value of these development rights. Conservation easements were first used on the East Coast more than 100 years ago and today more than 1,000 land trusts in the United States preserve land with high conservation value through conservation easements, land purchases, land donations and other land protection tools.



## WATER ALLIANCE ADDRESSES MULTIPLE ISSUES

The Water Alliance for Preserving Geneva Lake, led by the Geneva Lake Conservancy, is involved in multiple projects this summer to improve the health of Geneva Lake.

Professor Dale Splinter is working with students from the University of Wisconsin—Whitewater to monthly test phosphorus levels and other variables in 16 tributaries to Geneva Lake that have shown high phosphorus levels. The data will be entered into the DNR WIS.CALM Website and will provide a baseline to develop projects to reduce phosphorus levels on these creeks, particularly due to soil erosion, agricultural runoff and other sources.

In addition, the GLC along with Alliance members from other organizations, obtained a grant this spring to purchase a CD3 boat cleaning system that will be tested at various public boat launches this summer to help reduce the number of invasive species entering the lake.



Alliance member Bob Morava and Geneva Lake Conservancy staff members Kiera Theys, Maddie Olivier and Mikayla Kucia inspected the new CD3 for removing invasive species from boats.

The Alliance is also working on a number of other important projects, including a plan to reroute Southwick Creek in Williams Bay to improve aquatic habitat, as well as a project to identify the sources of red discharge near Big Foot Creek.

The GLC also plans to work with other Alliance members this summer to plant 22 buffer strips and rain gardens on properties ranging from Yerkes Observatory to Holiday Home and Conference Point camps as well as on several homeowner association's properties. These buffer strips and rain gardens help absorb pollutants before they enter the lake.

The Alliance is also sending a survey to residents in the Geneva Lake watershed in late summer. The results of the survey will help guide a new Geneva Lake Management Plan that will be completed by the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission in 2022.

## MICHAEL FIELD'S CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROTECTS HONEY CREEK

A scenic portion of Honey Creek is now preserved forever thanks to a conservation easement completed this May by the Conservancy with the Michael Field's Agricultural Institute.

The conservation easement protects a public path along the creek that runs from the Institute at W2493 Main Street in East Troy to a bridge that crosses the creek. The 6.3 acres protected by the conservation easement includes a Primary Environmental Corridor that provides habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including bald eagles.

The property also contains remnant oak forest and almost 2,000 feet of shoreline along Honey Creek.

Michael Field's Agricultural Institute's mission is to assist local farmers in acquiring the resources to help them grow and market local products while using practices that benefit environmental and human health. It provides consumer education in agro ecology and biodynamic agriculture and facilitates local food system building.





## CONSERVATION@HOME

Geneva Lake Conservancy would like to welcome three new Conservation@Home volunteers this year: Carol Elkins, Amanda Granger, and Sonette Tippens. We also thank our returning volunteers, Kathleen Renowden and Joan Rost. We are thrilled to have them all on board to spread the word on native plantings and environmentally friendly gardening.



Volunteers have been busy this summer visiting the properties of 15 private landowners and certifying 11 properties. The certification of a yard indicates its conservation potential, and its ability to protect and support our natural landscape and surrounding wildlife.

“We know that 90% of land in Walworth County is privately owned and we know that ecologically healthy gardening is not something that is widely discussed,” said Maddie Olivieri, Community Outreach Manager. “Caring for our land is an incredibly impactful way to protect our local ecosystems. That’s why the education that we provide through Conservation@Home is pertinent to the Conservancy’s mission of protecting Walworth County land and waterways.”

We celebrate those homeowners who have worked hard to cultivate an ecologically healthy yard, and we invite anyone who is interested in learning more about conservation-based land management to schedule a site visit with our volunteers. You can reach out to Maddie Olivieri at [outreach@genevalakeconservancy.org](mailto:outreach@genevalakeconservancy.org), or register on our website.

### 2021 Certified Landowners: April – Mid-June

Black Point Estate

Kevin Brunner

Kim Parker

Bruce & Gail Johnson

Terri Dell

Bernadette Russow

Beth Rendall

Anita Jolliffee

Susan & John Hughes

Dan & Paula Jarzemsky

JaNelle Powers



Pictured, left to right, Beth Rendall, Bruce and Gail Johnson, and Susan and John Hughes. During a site visit with a homeowner, Conservation@Home volunteers look for landscape practices in six categories, and if a homeowner qualifies, they receive a Conservation@Home sign to display on their property.

The Conservation@Home program is underwritten by  
Karl & Lucy Otzen and Otzen Family Foundation.

## GLC CELEBRATES OAKTOBER

The majestic oak savannas and woodlands of Walworth County are disappearing. Only 17 percent of oak trees that were here prior to European settlement remain. You can help preserve and replace these oak trees by participating in one or all of three special Conservancy activities this fall: 1. Heritage Oak Contest; 2. Oak tree sale for property owners; 3. Memorial Trees.

### HELP PLANT A MEMORIAL TREE

The Conservancy is upgrading its Mill House property in Fontana by planting 4 additional oak trees this fall to help educate visitors on the different types of oaks found in Walworth County. For a donation of \$500, we will honor a family member or friend that has passed with a small plaque beneath one of the trees. For more information contact Kiera Theys at [ktheys@genevalakeconservancy.org](mailto:ktheys@genevalakeconservancy.org).

## 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.*

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

**Proceeds will benefit GLC's restoration efforts.**

(Trees will come with planting instructions and oak tree care tips.)

**All trees in 3 gallon pots are \$50.00. Trees grown in 5 gallon pots are \$65.00.**

\_\_\_\_\_ 3 Gal Swamp White Oak. (Prefers acidic, moist, well-drained soils. Height at maturity: 50-60')

\_\_\_\_\_ 3 Gal Bur Oak (Prefers dry, alkaline soils that are well drained. Height at maturity: 70-80')

\_\_\_\_\_ 5 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  
October 14 & 15.

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.

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

Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

The Conservancy would like to thank the Griffith Family, Keefe Kares and an anonymous donor for sponsoring the Heritage Oak Program.



## HEALTHY LAKES GRANTS

Healthy Lakes & Rivers is a competitive grant program through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) in which homeowners, homeowner's associations, and other lake organizations are given the opportunity to improve their lakefront property using 5 different best practices. Each of these best practices have been strategically picked and proven to improve the water quality and shoreline habitat. Using the WDNR's technical guidance and informational flyers, you can design and install a project on your own, or apply through an eligible applicant for grants such as a non-profit organization like the Geneva Lake Conservancy. For installation of the rain garden or native planting you will work with a contractor such as Roy Diblik, owner of Northwind Perennial Farm in Burlington, or another contractor of your choice to accomplish your project once you receive Healthy Lakes funding. In order to receive funding, your project site and best practice installation must take place within 1,000 feet or less from the lake. Each rain garden or native planting installed receives \$1,000 to go towards your project implementation on your property.



The June 11 Healthy Lakes Open House.



Roy Diblik, left, answers a homeowner's question.

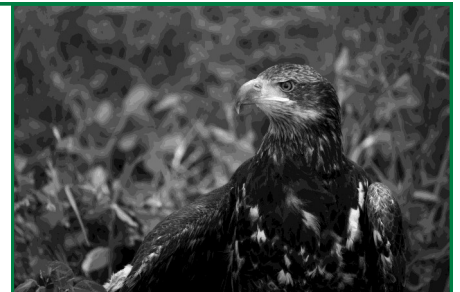
The GLC has worked with almost 10 different groups over the course of 2 years to install rain gardens and native plantings on participant's properties. We also hosted a Conservation@Home and Healthy Lakes Walk on June 11<sup>th</sup> at the Buena Vista Association lakefront to showcase their multiple rain gardens and native plantings installed by Roy Diblik last year in conjunction with the program. With over 25 participants on the walk it was a great success!

If you are interested in learning more about our involvement in this program or are interested in participating in our 2021 or 2022 applications, please contact [ktheys@genevalakeconservancy.org](mailto:ktheys@genevalakeconservancy.org) for more information. You can also visit the

Healthy Lakes & Rivers website for more information at: <https://healthylakeswi.com/>. The deadline for the next grant application the GLC will be submitting is November 1<sup>st</sup>.

## RAPTOR SHOW at WHITE RIVER COUNTY PARK

Join us on Friday, August 6th, 11 am, at White River County Park for the environmental education event hosted by the Conservancy with the Friends of White River County Park. Dianne Moller, founder of Hoo's Woods, will provide a 45-minute presentation on various birds of prey, including owls and a bald eagle. See four rehabilitated birds up close! Hope you will join us on the 6th to see these spectacular birds and learn how we can help protect them.



Victor, above, was recued by Hoo's Woods.

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

## NEW 2021 ACTIVITIES AT ROHNER CHILDREN'S PARK

The Conservancy is thrilled to kick off our summer classes for children again this year. After suspending all classes in 2020 due to COVID-19, activities at the Helen Rohner Children's Fishing Park are back in full swing.

We are pleased to offer Fishing Lessons for children aged 4-12 every Tuesday at 10am and 11am; Story Time with Barrett Memorial Library every Wednesday at 10am; and Nature Classes with Kishwaukétoe Nature Conservancy every Friday at 11am. All our programs are free, and registration is required for both Fishing Lessons and Nature Classes. Please register on our website.

Fishing lessons are taught in conjunction with the Lake Geneva Fishing Club and are led by volunteer instructors Bob Kantor and Ken Kolbuzs. Kantor has been the lead instructor since the lessons started in 2018 and has been an avid fisherman of the Geneva Lake area since 1988. We are thrilled to have him back this year and would like to thank him for his volunteer efforts.

Our first story time with Barrett Memorial Library kicked off on June 16th. The library's summer reading theme is Tails & Tales, so most of the books picked for our story time involve animals – many of which you can find right in the Fishing Park.



Conservancy intern Mikayla Kucia led our first Nature Class on June 18th, where we taught 20 children how terrariums trap heat and light, much like the Earth's atmosphere. We then supplied everyone with a jar to make their very own terrarium – complete with hydro grains, pebbles, soil (that each child dug from our worm digging bin,) a small succulent, and moss. Our upcoming classes for the month of July and August include: making mud art, using microscopes to explore, learning about a bug's life, and a wildflower hunt and registration is on our website.

We hope to see you at Helen Rohner Children's Fishing Park for our summer programs.

## 'NO MOW' PROGRAM SAVES POLLINATOR HABITAT

Thanks to Dr. Gerri Green, thousands of bees, butterflies and other pollinators (such as wasps, moths and hummingbirds) will find more habitat in Walworth County.

As a GLC member, Dr. Green approached the Conservancy about 3 years ago with a plan to ask the Walworth County road crews to stop mowing along state and county highways because plants important to pollinators—milkweed, golden rod, chicory, daisies, dandelions, bee balm—grow there.

Because the Conservancy was already working with Richard Hough, Director of Public Works, and his staff on other projects, the staff was able to arrange a meeting with Hough and his road crew and identify areas along more than 8 county roads where not mowing would not compromise safety.

So this summer look for "No Mow, Pollinator Plants" signs along these roads as well as bees and butterflies and lots of native plants and weeds important to pollinators. A special thanks also go to Walworth County employees Richard Hough, Barry Pierce, and Dale Poggensee for assistance in creating the program.





## SUSAN ELBERT STEELE JOINS CONSERVANCY BOARD

Susan Elbert Steele joined the Conservancy board in April and brings 24 years of service in the public sector, as well as 20 years in the financial and real estate areas. Currently the Village Administrator, Village of Sharon, Susan's past experience includes market research, strategic financial consulting for sustainable entrepreneurs, municipalities and not-for-profits, focusing on implementation of long-term goals and increased financial stability. Sustainability has always been a focus of Susan's work, and has varied from agricultural land best practices, conservation easements, clean water grants, and surface water runoff for city properties through the installation of rain gardens.



Susan's maternal and paternal families are Fontana and Williams Bay residents. Susan spent summers in Buena Vista, until her junior year in high school when she moved full time to the area graduating from Big Foot High School before attending and graduating from UW-Madison. She moved to Tulsa, married, had her son, and lived there for 13 years before moving to Anamosa, Iowa where she raised her son until receiving her MPA from the University of Nebraska. Susan managed or has been involved in local governments in Iowa, Wisconsin, Nebraska, New Mexico and Pennsylvania.

Susan's son and wife live in Des Moines, Iowa. When her paternal aunt's home became available in 2018 in Williams Bay, she purchased it, and then during the pandemic decided to move with her rescue dog, Butchy, into it.

The Conservancy looks forward to working with Susan and welcomes her passion and talent to create connected and creative communities by balancing their economic, social and environmental needs.

## SUMMER STAFF ENABLES CONSERVANCY TO EXPAND PROGRAMS

### KEVIN WILLIAMS—Seasonal Land Protection Specialist

Kevin Williams's smile is familiar to Conservancy supporters! A volunteer at Conservancy events since 2013, Kevin has helped at Holly Ball, summer and special events.



Kevin's education focus was on the outdoors and protecting the environment. Kevin attended George Williams College, earning a BS, Park and Recreation, and Gateway Technical Institute, receiving AS, Civil Engineering—Fresh Water Resources.

Responsible for some of the maintenance of Conservancy owned properties, such as tree planting, sign installation and invasive species removal, Kevin is learning the nuts and bolts of land protection, such as monitoring conservation easements. A life-time resident of Lake Geneva, Kevin is thrilled to be working with the Conservancy!

### MIKAYLA KUCIA—Summer Intern

Mikayla Kucia just recently joined the Conservancy as our new Helen Rohner Children's Fishing Park summer intern. She is currently attending the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and is majoring in Biology with an emphasis in Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, and a minor in Environmental Studies.



She is working full-time at the Helen Rohner Children's Fishing Park where she will assist with fishing lessons, nature classes and story times, as well as our special Monarch events on July 2 and August 14. Her duties include greeting park visitors and engaging them in the various activities at the park. Mikayla loves learning about and discussing environmental education and sustainability and is excited to learn more about conservation while being a part of the GLC team this summer.



# Geneva Lake Conservancy

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



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With Speaker  
**DOUG TALLAMY**

Nature's Best Hope:  
A New Approach To  
Conservation That  
Starts In Your Yard

**SATURDAY JULY 17**

**\$175/PERSON**  
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