

landscene

Spring 2016

PERMANENTLY
PROTECTED

Natural Heritage
LAND TRUST

ANGIE BANKS

In December 2015 Natural Heritage Land Trust purchased 25 acres at Lodi Marsh on the border of Dane and Columbia counties.

Milestone Passed: Over 10,000 Acres Permanently Protected

December was a good month for land conservation in south central Wisconsin. We completed three important conservation projects that permanently protected land at a state wildlife area, state natural area, and along a trout stream. These projects pushed the total amount of land and water protected by Natural Heritage Land Trust in our 33 years over the 10,000 acre mark. Only a few other local land trusts in Wisconsin have protected as much land. And while numbers of acres is only one measure of our success, it demonstrates the positive mark our community of supporters has made on the look and feel of the beautiful and productive landscape of south central Wisconsin. Thank you for your continued support of *conservation where you live*.

Our thanks go to Tom and Connie Lange for selling us a 25-acre part of Lodi Marsh within the **Lodi Marsh State Wildlife Area**. According to Tom, "parting with the property just felt it was a good fit for Lodi Marsh. In particular, this gives ac-

cess to the west end. It was obvious to us that people want to access the property." Lodi Marsh sits in a beautiful valley and features almost 1,200 acres of state land open to the public for outdoor recreation. A 2.5-mile segment of the Ice Age Trail traverses the east side of Lodi Marsh. Funding to protect the property came from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, the Dane County Conservation

Fund, Culver's VIP Foundation, and supporters of Natural Heritage Land Trust.

Hefty Creek, in Green County, has been designated as an Exceptional Resource Water by the Wisconsin DNR. As a "Class 2" trout stream, Hefty Creek provides habitat for the natural reproduction of trout, but Class 2 streams usually require stocking to maintain a desirable sport fishery. Through the generous donation of a conservation easement on their 252-acre farm, a conservation-minded couple has permanently protected a 5,000-foot stretch of the creek as well as adjacent lowland and upland habitat, including savanna and prairie remnants. The newly protected property is adjacent

NAN RUDD



The Hefty Creek farm includes oak trees more than 200 years old.

to a permanent streambank easement held by the DNR on an upstream stretch of Hefty Creek. Culver's VIP Foundation and supporters of Natural Heritage Land Trust provided funds to complete the project.

In December we also completed an important addition to our preserve at **Westport Drumlin State Natural Area**, east of Waunakee. The ten-acre farm-

Natural Heritage Land Trust
Executive Director Jim Welsh
and landowner Jim Koltes
at Westport Drumlin.

DEREK JOHNSON



stead that was excluded from one of our original purchases at the preserve is now part of the 213-acre protected landscape. The farmstead, with a few buildings and a driveway off of Bong Road, will provide an improved gateway to the preserve. Some of the buildings may be used to store management equipment and provide shelter for events. A proposed parking area would be large enough to allow school buses to turn around, finally making it possible for school groups to visit this rare prairie gem preserve. The ten-acre property includes a one-acre remnant of prairie sod, part of the once-vast Empire Prairie that at the time of European settlement spread across the

land between Madison and Arlington.

For landowner Jim Koltes, the sale was a happy ending to the family's long history with the land. "This farm has been in and out of my family for over 125 years. I know it is a special place and it means so much to me to know it will be preserved forever in its natural state." **To learn more about the Koltes' family history, please visit nhlt.org/farmstead.**

Funding to protect the property came from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, the Dane County Conservation Fund, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and supporters of Natural Heritage Land Trust. ■

WELCOME Sara Graves

Sara Graves joined the Natural Heritage Land Trust team as our Annual Giving Manager last fall. A nonprofit development veteran, Sara enjoys building and maintaining relationships with the individuals that make organizations effective. At Natural Heritage Land Trust, Sara focuses on working with supporters and coordinating field trips to give those supporters an opportunity to see firsthand the lands they helped permanently protect.

You earned your BA in Political Science and Global Studies. Why those majors?

Originally, I was going to school for nursing. I wanted to make a difference—and working to save lives is one way to do that—but along the way I discovered that sometimes it can be more effective to save lives with the stroke of a pen.

After graduation, Sara moved to the greater Milwaukee area and worked for local campaigns before joining the development team of the Alzheimer's



Sara Graves hiked
a segment of the
Appalachian Trail in
Tennessee last year.

Association of Southeastern Wisconsin. Here she developed her skill-set and found what she loved to do—build and maintain relationships.

What lead you to Madison and eventually Natural Heritage Land Trust?

I grew up in Bruce, WI, but only earned my appreciation for the natural world when I realized how much I missed it after leaving. Looking back, everything I did involved being in nature. I was drawn to Madison because of its natural beauty; you're never too far from nature.

Natural Heritage Land Trust offered

me the opportunity to get back into the nonprofit world working for something that I care about: protecting natural landscapes in the local area so that one day my three sons won't have to travel too far from home to find solitude in the natural world.

How do you find your solitude today?

Every June, my spouse and I take a backpacking trip. I was actually proposed to and married on a hiking trail. So, every year I find my peace back on a trail. As soon as one trip ends, I'm planning my next one! ■



Natural Heritage Land Trust protects natural areas, wildlife habitat, working farms, healthy lakes and streams, and recreational land to provide a high quality of life in the Dane County region.

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JEFFREY J. STROBEL

Remembering Gene Roark (1931–2015)

Gene Roark was a loyal and active supporter of Natural Heritage Land Trust and many other conservation organizations in Wisconsin.

This recollection of Gene was written for us by his wife of 62 years, Jean Roark.

Gene's interest in land preservation had its beginning early in his life. With his parents and sister and brother, he took trips to state and national parks, went camping, hiked, canoed Wisconsin rivers, explored the countryside, went bird-watching and engaged in other outdoor activities. The importance of protecting wild places and eco-systems was a natural outgrowth of these experiences. One of Gene's outdoor pursuits as a young adult was hunting deer and other game. Many people are surprised to learn that an environmentalist could also be a hunter; Gene often pointed out that hunters as a group were among the first to show concern with loss of species and habitats.

Throughout his life, Gene had a great appreciation of the natural world. He was never a single issue person—he worked with many groups to help preserve lakes, rivers, marshes, prairies, oak openings, forests, natural wonders, endangered animal and plant species and to forestall global warming. He talked about saving special places and taking care of the earth for our grandchildren and the future. On May, 2, 2015 Gene was inducted into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.

Gene's heirs and his sister Nancy and brother Bill own approximately 24 acres of undeveloped land and shoreline on Lake Wisconsin, which they call "The Point." In conjunction with Natural Heritage Land Trust, they placed a conservation easement on this property in 2004 to protect the shoreline and to prevent commercial development.

The last experience Gene had at The Point before he died this past October was a boat ride along the shoreline of the

Roark land. He enjoyed seeing the wild-life and vegetation, including the many white pines he and I planted many years ago. He was pleased to view the 3,000 feet of undeveloped shoreline, an uncommon sight on Lake Wisconsin. He reminisced how the land had changed from degraded pasture in the 1930s, when the family bought the land, to its present more natural state. And, of course, he remembered all the enjoyable times he and his family had at The Point. ■

Remembering Richard Merrill (1923–2015)

Richard Merrill, a friend of Natural Heritage Land Trust and former easement landowner, passed away on December 2, 2015. In 2009 Richard protected Wildcat Bluff, a prominent landmark on the upper end of Lake Wisconsin, by working with Natural Heritage Land Trust to place a permanent conservation easement on his property. We asked his family to help us share his story and in the process they uncovered a treasure. Here, in her own words, Katherine Merrill shares the finding of her dad's essay, "A Beautiful View".

"My sisters and I spent hours cleaning out Mom's and Dad's house over the past couple months. They had lived in the home since they built it in the early 1950s so the task has been incredible—lots of

stuff got thrown in boxes to be sorted later. This morning at about 5:30 am before my first cup of coffee, I grabbed a handful of stuff bound with a rubber band, his favorite filing system, and brought it downstairs to start reading. It turned out to be a bundle of English essays Dad wrote in 1945 after returning from WWII and enrolling at UW-Madison. There was one titled "A Beautiful View" and it was immediately obvious what he was writing about. Of course, the view is from Wildcat Bluff, the property he placed in a conservation easement through Natural Heritage Land Trust. His English Instructor, Mrs. Ramsperger, gave him a B+, partly for spelling 'finally' with one 'l'. She also seemed disturbed that he said nothing about the 'sand'—but I doubt there was any in view at that time."

To read Richard's essay please visit nhlt.org/WildcatBluff. ■

Richard Merrill, and Jim Welsh, Executive Director of Natural Heritage Land Trust, at Wildcat Bluff.



JEFFREY J. STROBEL

John Muir Farm Update: In December we donated 77 acres of the Eggleston/Muir property north of Portage to the Ice Age Trail Alliance. Part of our 2014 purchase of the 198-acre Bessie Eggleston property protecting a portion of the farm where a young John Muir, father of our National Park System, spent his formative years, the 77 acres will one day host a link in the wonderful Ice Age Trail. The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is a part of the National Park System, and the timing of the transfer of the Eggleston land is fitting: 2016 is the 100th anniversary of the National Park System. **Save the date for the Centennial Celebration of the National Park System on Saturday, August 6th at John Muir County Park, Marquette County. For details, please check our website this summer.**

BRANT ERICKSON





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Conservation where you live

303 S Paterson St, Suite 6
Madison, WI 53703

www.nhlt.org
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Places Worth Knowing

Join Natural Heritage Land Trust on one of our field trips and get to know the places you have helped to protect. Our outings are led by landowners or expert naturalists, offering you unique opportunities to enjoy and learn about our wonderful landscape while meeting others who share your commitment to conservation where you live.



MARIO QUINTANA

Vera Bauman Bird Walk

Sunday, May 15, 2016
8:00–10:00 am

Natural Heritage Land Trust was founded 33 years ago to permanently protect Wally Bauman Woods, now part of the UW Lakeshore Nature Preserve. Join us and Roma Lenehan, of Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve, on this easy morning walk along the Lake Mendota shoreline and hear the story of how a small group of citizens saved 3.4 acres of woodland on the bluffs of Lake Mendota in 1983. This bird walk is in honor of Wally's wife Vera who passed away on February 22, 2016. We will have loaner binoculars, provided by Madison Audubon Society.

Thanks to our sponsors:



Nancy and Jack Heiden



MARIO QUINTANA

Yahara River Paddle

Sunday, May 22, 2016
Noon to 4:30 pm

This will be our first trip past the 40 acres we purchased on the northeast side of Stoughton in October 2014. The land boasts over a mile of frontage on the Yahara River and is a popular stopover for migrating waterfowl. Join our past president, Willi Van Haren, for an afternoon on the Yahara River. Everyone is responsible for bringing their own equipment.

Thanks to our sponsors:



Arnett Homes, LLC



German Valley Savanna Hike

Thursday, June 23, 2016
4:00–6:00 pm

June is a perfect time to visit this diverse private property, featuring oak savanna, wetland, prairie, a segment of German Valley Creek, and a beautiful barn that was protected with a conservation easement generously donated by Julie Hayward and Donn D'Alessio in 1995. Current landowner Gary Karls will lead a hike over this beautiful 77 acre property.

Thanks to our sponsors:



Our field trips are free of charge but pre-registration is required.
Reserve your spot online today at nhlt.org/events or call Sara at 608-258-9797.