



DANE COUNTY NATURAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Dedicated to the protection and preservation of natural areas in Dane County through conservation easements, land donations and education.

Fall 1999

Fish Lake UPDATE

Our Fish Lake Project has kept the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation hopping this summer. First, on July 15, we closed the first phase of our two-year, \$3.06 million project to preserve 140 acres of some of the county's best lakefront property. We also held our first ever pancake breakfast at the Roxbury Tavern and are planning not one, but two other special Fish Lake events — a fish fry at the Dorf Haus in Roxbury (Oct. 22) and a wine tasting at Wollersheim Winery (Oct. 31). Finally, we've put together a lovely slide show on our project, thanks to the combined talents of Bill Pielsticker, Mike Irwin, Ray Unrein, and VIP Duplicating Services.

The July closing brought to an end the first of three stages in the property acquisition on the 254-acre lake outside the Town of Roxbury. It included the purchase of a wooded hillside,

farmland, and a former campground. The second and third phases of the Fish Lake Project consist of buying the mobile home sites. The foundation plans to complete the purchase in spring 2001.

"We're excited to have finished the first stage of this project," says Foundation President John Hutchinson. "The people of this community have already demonstrated a strong commitment to Fish Lake. We urgently need

continued public financial support to bring the project to fruition."

The Natural Heritage Foundation is working with the Dane County Parks Department and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to ensure that Fish Lake remains one of the county's aquatic gems. The Foundation has applied to various state and local agencies for financial assistance. First Business Bank of Madison and The Conservation Fund, a national non-profit organization, have provided low-cost loans to help cover the project's initial costs.



The second phase of efforts to protect Fish Lake shoreline is underway.

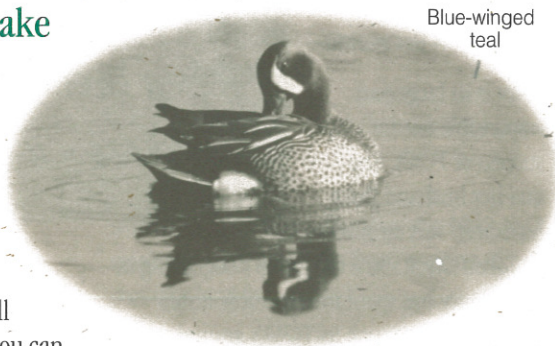
Bill Pielsticker photo

A Naturalist Looks at Fish Lake

By Jean Unmuth

With fall on our doorstep, we tend to turn our backs on the lakes, and look inland for outdoor activities. But, pick a warm autumn day and visit Fish Lake in northwestern Dane County. You will not be disappointed. The lake is accessible to small boats (electric motors only), and so quiet you can hear the water dripping from your canoe paddle. Fish Lake is crystal clear as it gets ready for winter. People are few, but shorebirds, ducks and songbirds are plentiful. Flocks of blue-winged teal, mallard, bufflehead, scaup, ringnecked, and wood ducks are scattered about the lake. Cedar waxwings, American goldfinches, and rose-breasted grosbeaks gather lakeside in preparation for their long flights south. The great blue and black night herons crown the stumps of trees — birch and cottonwood — that gave up to the rising water levels long ago.

wetland-upland plant community holds a diverse and rich animal community. Fish Lake retains remnants of this mosaic, but historically the spectrum of plants was much broader. Thirty years



Blue-winged teal

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DANE COUNTY NATURAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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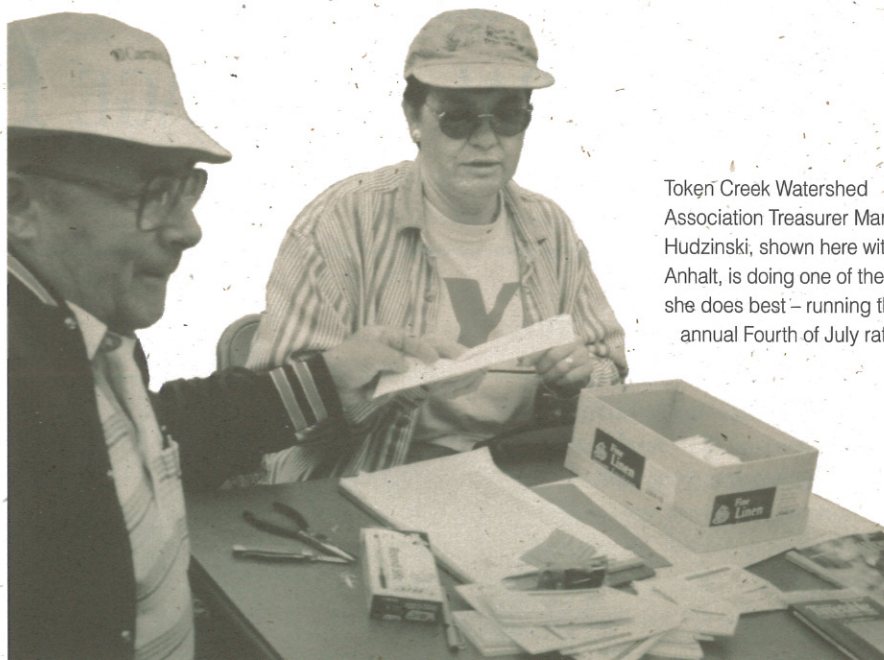
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Token Creek Watershed Association Treasurer Mary Hudzinski, shown here with Art Anhalt, is doing one of the things she does best – running the annual Fourth of July raffle.

A Token Creek Winner

Gathering Waters, the statewide organization for land trusts, awarded one of the Token Creek stalwart workers its *Volunteer of the Year* Award. Watershed association secretary Mary Hudzinski was one of three winners who were honored at the Gathering Waters Conference at Devil's Head Resort last month.

Mary is in large part responsible for the success of TCWA. She and her husband Doug have been very involved in Token Creek since the group's beginning in 1997. Mary has spent innumerable hours planning events such as TCWA's annual forums, fundraising and handling the fledgling organization's fiscal responsibilities.

"Mary is in large part responsible for the success of the Token Creek Watershed Association"

This past year, Mary single-handedly organized the Token Creek Fourth of July Raffle – the group's major fundraising event.

She solicited most of the event's nearly 50 prizes. The raffle raised over \$4,000 for the organization. As treasurer, Mary was a major force behind the TCWA's incorporation – filling out onerous IRS paperwork and organizing the required information.

Mary's dedication to Token Creek is exemplary.

She consistently is the individual that her peers can count on to assume responsibility for nearly any task – monotonous or challenging. Mary's generosity of spirit, motivation, and hard work are an inspiration. Bravo!

*Know of any events for our announcements page?
Contact Sarah at 258-9797 and let her know.*

A Fond Farewell

The past twelve months have been a time of great transition for the Token Creek Watershed Association. Jon Doré left last August for Maine and a new job with the South Portland Land Trust. Sarah Van Tiem began as the new coordinator just as the Dept. of Natural Resources announced that the US Army Corps of Engineers selected Token Creek for a long-term, multi-million dollar stream restoration.

Last fall, the DNR and town of Windsor purchased 66 acres surrounding the former millpond dam. A short time later, the town purchased another 60-some acres right next door. These purchases will make possible the creek restoration and the creation of a new conservancy park.

In the midst of these exciting changes, the Token Creek Watershed Project took a bold step. After working under the sponsorship of the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation for over two years, they decided to form a board of directors and incorporate as an independent non-profit known as the Token Creek Watershed Association (TCWA). A couple months of recruiting yielded a distinguished board of directors:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Jim Bricker | • Curt Jahn |
| • Sarah Cook (Secretary) | • Herman Krause |
| • Tom Culver (Chair) | • Gordon Merry |
| • Jerry Derr | • Jo Ann Orfan |
| • Heddy Grove | • Dennis O'Loughlin |
| • Barb Hennings | • Bruce Stravinski (Vice Chair) |
| • Mary Hudzinski (Treasurer) | • and Don Tierney |

With the generous help of Johanna London and Mike Green, of the law firm Michael, Best and Friedrich, the organization wrote its bylaws and has incorporated as a state of Wisconsin non-profit. They have also applied to the Internal Revenue Service for federal non-profit status. These changes mean that TCWA and the Natural Heritage Foundation are



The Token Creek Watershed Association Board takes its first official action – signing the TCWA Articles of Incorporation. From left to right (front): Treasurer Mary Hudzinski, Heddy Grove; left to right (rear): Barb Hennings, Jerry Derr, Gordon Merry, Herman Krause, Don Tierney, Vice Chair Bruce Stravinski and Johanna London of Michael Best & Friedrich.

ending their formal relationship. The Foundation will no longer provide a coordinator, office space or materials. However, it has given TCWA a small grant to get the group off to a good start. The Foundation hopes to continue working with TCWA on land protection and conservation easements in the watershed.

Sarah Van Tiem will remain with the Natural Heritage Foundation. For now, the watershed organization will not have staff support. This means it will rely more heavily on board members and volunteers. Its activities will continue though, as plans for the 2000 Spring Forum, the Annual Fourth of July Celebration, a fall tour, a membership drive and others are already underway.

The final bit of exciting news is that TCWA now has a home in the watershed. The town of Windsor has graciously agreed to lend the group office space for the near future. To contact someone from the board, call 846-3854, fax 846-2328 or write TCWA at PO Box 366, Windsor WI 53598.

Evenson's Woods

Editor's note: This is one in a series of retrospectives on the Natural Heritage Foundation's preservation projects over the past 16 years.

by Matt Nilsson

It's known as trillium hill for its picturesque spring bloom, and Eldon Evenson wanted to preserve its beauty forever.

"He contacted the Foundation and said he owned this wooded tract out in the town of Vermont and wanted to give it to a group that would help protect it," recalls Bill O'Connor, Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation Conservation Director.

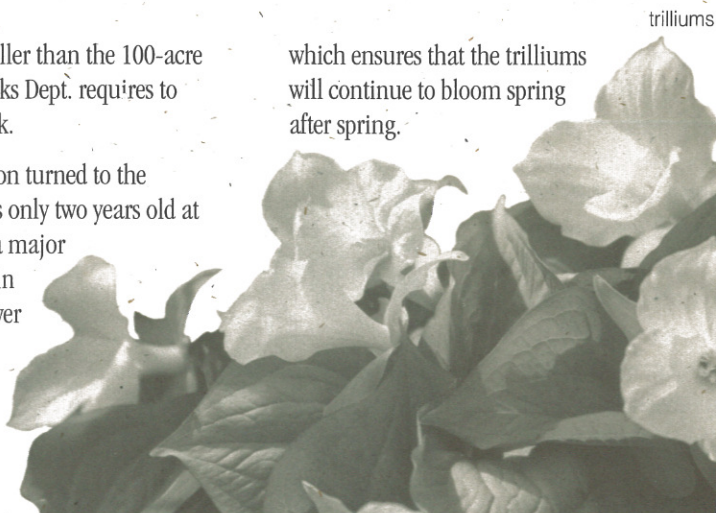
The Foundation wasn't the first group Evenson contacted. He originally offered the land to the Dane County Parks Dept., but staff couldn't accept it. Evenson's seven-acre

woodland hill was smaller than the 100-acre minimum that the Parks Dept. requires to consider land for a park.

In the fall of 1985, Eldon turned to the Foundation, which was only two years old at the time and fresh off a major victory the year before in helping to save the Lower Eagle Heights Woods from development.

The Foundation happily accepted Evenson's donation,

which ensures that the trilliums will continue to bloom spring after spring.



Margaret Sommers photo

A Naturalist Looks at Fish Lake, cont'd

ago, Fish Lake's vegetation showed a lake following the normal aging process. As a lake grows older, it slowly fills in with sediment, and bog plants advance out into the lake.

Currently, Fish Lake's aging process is in reverse, with wetlands and uplands shrinking from increasing water levels. This shift reflects changing land use patterns, rather than short-term fluctuations in weather. Years of continuous wet or dry weather can influence vegetation types, but does not normally stop a lake's aging process. Loss of marshes perched in the watershed above Fish Lake, and low-lying wetlands has increased water flow across the land and into the lake.

In the early 1970s Fish Lake's aquatic plant communities included dense floating peat/cattail bogs, stands of river bulrush, and meadows dominated by a variety of sedges. More than 80 different bird species were present, but those numbers have since diminished. Now birds like the Virginia rail, the common gallinule, the sora, the black tern, and the swamp sparrow, once known to breed near Fish Lake are rare, if seen at all.

How has a changing landscape influenced the fish in Fish Lake? Historically, northern pike were more plentiful, but loss of cattail bogs, their prime spawning and rearing habitat, has contributed to a noticeable decline in their abundance. The panfish population is big in numbers but the average size of crappie, bluegill, pumpkinseed, perch and green sunfish is small.

This is common to Wisconsin lakes that have dense patches of underwater vegetation. Fish Lake is no exception, with Eurasian water milfoil covering about 40% of the lake's surface. The locally rare cisco, a cool water fish requiring relatively clear water, appears to be thriving in Fish Lake.

We can learn much from past land use. Reclaiming marshes in the watershed and re-establishing a buffer strip of shoreline plants and shrubs can restore a healthier balance to our lakes. Fish Lake's shoreline development is only moderate at present, and the watershed surrounding the lake is small. That means that even small restoration efforts could leave behind a beautiful legacy, one that can be enjoyed by generations to come.

American lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*) blossoms (left) adorn Fish Lake's neighbor, Mud Lake, on the other side of Fish Lake Road. A Great Blue Heron (below) finds the fishing good on Fish Lake.

These beautiful Fish Lake scenes were photographed by Bill Pielsticker. For information about ordering color prints of these and other Fish Lake photos, contact Pielsticker Photos at 608/592-4718.





Fish Lake's scenic, tiny watershed of two square miles.



Cottonwoods frame the shoreline at the site of the Natural Heritage Foundation's Fish Lake project.



Fragrant water lilies (*Nymphaea odorata*) bloom on Fish Lake in warmer weather.

Flipping for Fish Lake!



John Maniaci, Wisconsin State Journal photo

Roxbury Tavern proprietor Tom Gresser has flipped for Fish Lake – the pancake breakfast at his establishment raised \$1,500 for the cause.

Our first ever pancake breakfast, on August 29, was a rousing success. Nearly 150 lake lovers came to the Roxbury Tavern to show their support for Fish Lake and indulge in Dane County's best blueberry pancakes. Proprietor Tom Gresser outdid himself, personally flipping over 500 pancakes. This event raised over \$1,500 for the cause. Many thanks to everyone who helped make this event possible, including those of you who showed up to eat.

The Legacy Continues

Bill Wineke and the Wisconsin State Journal have done a wonderful job of promoting our effort to preserve part of Fish Lake. To date, the paper has raised nearly \$40,000 for this project. Many thanks, Bill.

A Meeting of the Minds

Many hours this summer went into developing a slide show to promote Fish Lake to the community and to potential supporters. This slide show came into being thanks to the considerable efforts and talents of some Fish Lake neighbors and their friends. Photographer Bill Pielsticker spent many hours enjoying Fish Lake's beauty from a variety of angles, including on his belly. Bill's photos are displayed here, and are available for purchase (the prints are in color). Twenty percent of the proceeds from the sales go to support our Fish Lake Project. Mike Irwin, farmer, teacher and writer, wrote the script, narrated, and coordinated production with his friend, Ray Unrein. Last but not least, VIP Duplicating Services donated the transfer of the slide show to videotape. Deepest thanks to all those who made this production possible, including: LaFollette High School, MATC, Bob Queen, the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Barb Jansen, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, VIP Duplicating Services and many others.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Events Calendar

Tour of the Lost City

October 31, 1-3 p.m.

University of Wisconsin Arboretum McKay Center

Supply-Chain Environmental Management

November 12

Milwaukee

Wisconsin Environmental Initiative

Call or e-mail 280-0360, wei@itis.com for more details.

Wilderness in National Parks: Visions for the 21st Century

November 15, 12:05 p.m.

National Parks Panel Discussion

State Historical Society Auditorium

Emerging Trends: Green Design

December 10

Madison

Wisconsin Environmental Initiative

Call or email 280-0360, wei@itis.com for more details.

Memorials and Other Gifts to Fish Lake

In Memory of Rita Wells

Jan and Scott Zimmerman

In Memory of Marcia Grau

Scott Laich and Sarah Van Tiem

In Memory of Jack Phillips

Joann Malcom

In Honor of Scott Zimmermann's

50th Birthday

Bill Lunney and Judie Pfeifer

In Honor of Mary Tatge and Bob Lange's

25th Anniversary

Sharon and Warren Gaskill

In Memory of Kate Schulte's Dad

Danielle Wood and Sarah Van Tiem



A Fish Lake milestone:

In July, the Natural Heritage Foundation closed the first phase of the Fish Lake project thanks to the generous support of Foundation members and many others. At the closing are Douglas Berry, treasurer (left), and Bill O'Connor, director of conservation.

DCNHF Wish List

- A TV/video monitor
- A fabric-covered display board
- Map holders
- Frequent flier miles (so we can attend national training sessions)
- Pentium laptop

Special Gifts

There's no better way to honor friends or family members who love the Dane County area's natural beauty than by helping to protect it.

A donation to the Natural Heritage Foundation can help protect a lakeshore, restore a prairie, or preserve a woodland. Consider a donation to commemorate a birthday, wedding or anniversary, or in memory of a loved one.

Help Wanted

The Natural Heritage Foundation offers volunteer opportunities to use your skills or develop new ones. Call us at 258-9797 for details. We're open to your ideas, but here are a few of the ways you can help:

Committees – we need your fundraising or publicity (writing, photography, design) skills. Our Outreach and Fundraising committees are looking for new members.

Special events – we're planning events to help raise funds for Fish Lake and are looking for people who enjoy planning and giving parties, picnics, paddles, etc.

Goodwill ambassadors – we're looking for some friendly faces to sit at our booth during local community events. This is a great way to meet people and spread the word about our Fish Lake Project.

Data entry – we need help typing information into our new database. No long-term commitment necessary.

Thank You

The Natural Heritage Foundation thanks our dedicated volunteers and supporters, including:

Board members and friends who helped with our Fish Lake Flapjack Breakfast at the Roxbury Tavern: Jim Bricker, Lloyd Eagan, Paula Frederick, Susan Fox, Roxbury Tavern Owner Tom Gresser, Larkin Harris, Scott Laich, Lisa Lutz, Pat Mantsch, Gene & Jean Roark, Jeanie & Jerry Sieling, Mark & Peggy Williams, Jean Unmuth (WDNR), Jim Van Deurzen, Jan & Scott Zimmermann, and the Amazos Barbershop Quartet.

Julie Hayward and Donn D'Alessio for letting us use their lovely property in Blue Mounds for our Site Monitoring Workshop,

Mike Irwin, for his enthusiastic work on the Fish Lake slide presentation, and for finding us others to help with the effort,

Brian Martin for letting us use his overhead projector,

Matt Nilsson, for still more newsletter articles,

Bill Pielsticker for his wonderful work on our Fish Lake slide show,

Ruth Oppedahl for leading our first ever Site Monitoring Workshop,

Harriet Riley for donating a much needed slide projector!

Kate Schulte for her administrative skills,

Mike and Linda Slavney for hosting a board and volunteer party,



Thank you!

Deb Slavin, for designing our wine tasting invitation and helping to pay for it,

Kate Schulte, Larry Gleasman, Diane Morris and Harriet Riley for getting to know our neighbors at the Orton Park Festival,

Jean Unmuth for her article on the natural history of Fish Lake, and

Ray Unrein, for producing our Fish Lake slide presentation and finding us the right equipment.

In addition, thanks to the following businesses and organizations for their wonderful support:

Badger Mortgage Services, Chickadee Depot, Grampa's Gunshop, and the Office of Brian Gutheinz for sponsoring the pancake breakfast.

The Roxbury Tavern for hosting a wonderful Flapjack Breakfast,

Steep and Brew for providing coffee for the Flapjack Breakfast,

Jeff Strobel of Print Wave for donating a portion of his services to the creation of this newsletter,

The Natural Resources Conservation Service for helping us with our slide presentation, and

VIP Duplicating Services for donating the cost of transferring our slide show to videotape.

Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation

Help us make a splash at Fish Lake!

Here's my contribution to the Fish Lake project:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bass Boon | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Heron Help | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Osprey Offering | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cisco Assistance | \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Turtle Tribute | \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | _____ |

Send to:



DCNHF
303 S. Paterson, Suite 6
Madison WI 53703



Thank you!

Name _____

Address _____

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Contributions are tax-deductible as provided for by law.

Please make checks payable to the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation.

Thank you!

☐ Check this box if you prefer to remain anonymous.

Dr. Watt's Legacy

Editor's note: This is the latest in a series of retrospectives on the Natural Heritage Foundation's preservation projects over the past 16 years.

by Matt Nilsson

A rich blend of habitats borders the southwest edge of Waubesa Wetlands in the Town of Dunn, south of Madison. Prairie, wetlands, woods and farmland come together in a 226-acre refuge for an array of plants, birds, mammals and reptiles. It's been a peaceful home for sandhill cranes, blue herons, willow flycatchers and rare Blanding's turtles.

It was also home to the late Alice Watts, a physician who dedicated more than half a century to her practice. Dr. Watts also spent many of these years preserving her land.

"She was a pioneer conservationist who was really committed to conserving her land," recalls Bill O'Connor, the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation's conservation director.

Dr. Watts demonstrated that commitment in

1986 when she donated a conservation easement on her land to the Foundation and the American Farmland Trust. The easement preserves prime farmland and provides critical habitat for animals and fish like trout, which swim in Murphy's Creek.



big bluestem

"The fish get to be pets of mine," Dr. Watts once said.

The easement also protects the prairie Dr. Watts worked so hard to restore with its big bluestem, evening primrose, Canadian rye, coneflowers and black-eyed Susans.

"The property is really very lovely," says Natural Heritage Foundation Past President Jean Meanwell. "It has an incredible series of springs with watercress in them."

These springs provide the wetlands with a constant source of pure water that flows at an estimated rate of 300 gallons per minute. And the land itself is a constant reminder of Dr. Watts' legacy of stewardship. In 1996, the Natural Heritage Foundation received 115 acres as part of her bequest from the Watts Estate.

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