

landscape

Summer 2012

Natural Heritage
LAND TRUST

PERMANENTLY
PROTECTED



Fountain Prairie Farms adds extra layer of sustainability

On July 3rd, Natural Heritage Land Trust completed an agricultural conservation easement on Fountain Prairie Farms with landowners John and Dorothy Priske. The large and diverse farm just west of Columbus in Columbia County contains rotationally-grazed pastures, a restored prairie and wetland, and a stretch of Babcock Creek, a tributary to the Crawfish River. The Priskes raise Scottish Highland cattle on their 277-acre farm and market their meats to customers through farmers' markets and local restaurants.

The Priskes are committed to sustainability and have won several awards for their farming practices, including the Conservation Farmer of the Year award in 2010, given by the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association, and a Leopold Restoration Award in 2011, given by the University of Wisconsin Arboretum. By restoring wetlands, controlling runoff from the farm, leaving some pastures ungrazed to benefit nesting grassland birds, and installing a 50 kilowatt wind turbine that powers the entire farm, the Priskes have demonstrated their strong land ethic.

John and Dorothy credit Aldo Leopold's essay "The Farmer as a Conservationist" with helping them to consider other approaches to farming. A trip to New Zealand, where they saw sheep being raised on rotationally grazed pastures helped solidify their ideas. Back home, the conversion of their farm to grass started in earnest. Each new conservation practice they incorporate on the farm leads them to another. Placing a conservation easement on the farm to protect it in perpetuity was a logical step. It also helps meet the goals of the DNR's Glacial Habitat Restoration Area by protecting grassland and wetland habitat for the benefit of waterfowl, pheasants, and songbirds.

"We wanted to be proactive and take responsibility for this land," John says. "The conservation easement allowed us to make a permanent decision to preserve the land that we've been stewards of for so many years."

To celebrate the completion of the conservation easement, the Priskes and Natural Heritage Land Trust will be hosting a special dinner on the farm prepared by Chef Tory Miller of L'Etoile and Graze restaurants on Sunday, September 16th.

Funding for this conservation easement purchase came from the USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements program, The Conservation Fund, and the members of Natural Heritage Land Trust. ■



ON THE FARM Farm Dinner at Fountain Prairie Farms

Sunday, September 16

3 pm – farm tour and live music

5 pm – dinner and dessert buffet

Celebrate the completion of an agricultural conservation easement with farmers John and Dorothy Priske. Tour their farm and enjoy a farm fresh dinner prepared by Chef Tory Miller of L'Etoile and Graze restaurants.

\$100 per person includes farm tour, live music, hors d'oeuvres, and a three-course family-style dinner with wine pairings and a dessert buffet.

Buy tickets online (www.nhlt.org), by calling 608/258-9797, or mail check to Natural Heritage Land Trust, 303 S. Paterson St, Suite 6, Madison WI 53703.

Seating is limited; the deadline to purchase tickets is Tuesday, September 4th. Tickets are nonrefundable. Questions? Contact Heidi at 258-9797 or heidi@nhlt.org.

Thanks to our generous partners:



Our summer restoration crew worked hard at Westport Drumlin this summer.



Summer Restoration Crew at Westport Drumlin

Inspired by the effective recipe for restoration practiced by Natural Heritage Land Trust members Kathie and Tom Brock at their Pleasant Valley Conservancy, this summer Natural Heritage Land Trust joined with Madison Audubon Society, Friends of Lakeshore Nature Preserve, and Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy to sponsor a five-person land management crew. Crew members Kristina Bartowitz,

Nicholas Schiltz, Allison Schmidt, Daniel Stien, and Christopher Warneke, all current college students or recent graduates, spent Tuesdays with Natural Heritage Land Trust staff tackling honeysuckle, buckthorn, and hot weather to restore the drumlin prairie and other prairie remnants at Westport Drumlin east of Waunakee.

Funding for the crew's work at Westport Drumlin was generously provided by Chabot Family Foundation, Cary and Scott Reich, Don and Joanne Tierney, Doug and Sherry Caves, and Tom and Kathie Brock. Said Dana Chabot, "Pat and I are pleased to help sponsor the Natural Heritage Land Trust's summer crew at Westport Drumlin. We believe it is important to cultivate the next generation of knowledgeable and enthusiastic naturalists." ■



First acquisition for Allen Creek Wetlands State Natural Area

In April, Natural Heritage Land Trust purchased 16.5 acres of land at Allen Creek Wetlands State Natural Area on Star School Road just south of Fort Atkinson. The land is about two miles upstream from where Allen Creek flows into the Rock River. The property is mostly sedge meadow with savanna and other uplands, providing good nesting and foraging habitat for a variety of birds and other animals, possibly including the state-threatened Blanding's turtle. This is the first acquisition of land within the state natural area boundary; it adjoins private land already protected by a permanent conservation easement.

The state natural area is within the Allen Creek River-based Conservation Area, a part of the Glacial Heritage Area (www.glacialheritagearea.org) which is an initiative to link parks, preserves, and wildlife and natural areas to nearby cities and villages in Jefferson County and beyond, providing opportunities for residents and visitors to get outdoors to enjoy and learn about nature. The property will be open to the public, and we hope to donate it to the DNR for long-term management.

Funding for this acquisition came from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and Natural Heritage Land Trust members. Our thanks to the landowners who made the conservation of this property possible. ■

Volunteers Needed for Black Hawk Ridge Trail Run

8K / 16K—Sunday, October 28, 2012

Natural Heritage Land Trust will be the major beneficiary of the Black Hawk Ridge Trail Run in October. This event is as good as it gets for trail running in the great outdoors of Dane County. Both the 8K and 16K include challenges like switchback climbs and quad-quivering descents. Registration (wisconsintrailruns.com) is limited to 250 runners and will go online in early September. We need ten volunteers to help with everything from parking, to course direction, to passing out water. To volunteer, please contact Heidi at 608/258-9797 or Heidi@nhlt.org by September 14th. ■



The 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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Birds prove Bobolink Hill Farm well-named during field trip

Nesting bobolinks were out in force during our May field trip to Bobolink Hill Farm in Iowa County. Natural Heritage Land Trust members enjoyed seeing the birds as well as displays of lupine and golden alexanders thriving in the prairie, savanna, and grassland landscape restored by landowner Mary Trewartha. Mary permanently protected her 169-acre farm with a conservation easement in 2003. Our thanks to Mary for hosting the field trip.

JULIE WIDHOLM



Osprey Platform

Last winter the DNR and Alliant Energy erected an osprey nesting platform on property protected in 2006 by Natural Heritage Land Trust at Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area along the Sugar River in Rock County. Osprey prefer to nest in the tops of tall dead trees near lakes or streams and large blocks of forests; the platform and its location near the floodplain forest is designed to mimic the bird's nesting habitat. According to DNR Wildlife Biologist Mike Foy, if things go well, osprey will check out the platform this year and might nest on it beginning in 2013. Natural Heritage Land Trust is now at work on another acquisition at Avon Bottoms.

Bird Walk at Louis' Bluff

On our spring field trip to Louis' Bluff on the Wisconsin River, one Natural Heritage Land Trust member described the walk through the floodplain forest as "like walking in an aviary". Highlights included screeching bald eagles, delicate pink lady slippers, and scarlet tanagers. Our hosts Frank and Mariana Weinhold permanently protected their 133-acre property with a conservation easement in 2007. Our thanks to the Weinholds for hosting the field trip as well as Madison Audubon Society for loaning binoculars.



Save the Date

Natural Heritage Land Trust 30th Anniversary Celebration

Thursday, April 25, 2013, 5:30 pm – 9:30 pm
Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery, Madison

Thank You

Special thanks to **Markus Candinas of Candinas Chocolatier** (www.candinas.com) for adding a very special touch—fine chocolates—to the 2012 Legacy Circle Wine and Cheese party.



Please remember Natural Heritage Land Trust in your will or estate plan.

What's Inside

- Fountain Prairie Farms Protected – Join us for Dinner!
- Amey Pond Shore Land Conserved
- Land Purchased at Allen Creek Wetlands
- Westport Drumlin Summer Crew Hard at Work



Conservation where you live

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PERMANENTLY
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Amey Pond shore land completely protected

In March, we purchased the last 10 acres of privately owned shore land at the Amey Pond Wildlife Refuge in Adams County on Highway 23 east of the Wisconsin Dells. Amey Pond is a 225-acre DNR wildlife property that provides habitat for a wide variety of waterfowl, including wood ducks, coots, and mallards; most springs white pelicans spend a few days on Amey Pond on their way north.

We bought the property from refuge neighbor Tom Bruss. A retired firefighter, Tom purchased the property several years ago in the hopes that it would one day become part of the refuge. Tom's foresight made it possible for the public to enjoy a rarity in southern Wisconsin, a completely undeveloped lake. In May we donated the property to the state as an addition to the Amey Pond refuge.

Funds to purchase the property came from the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, the federal North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and Natural Heritage Land Trust members. ■