

Land

Waukesha County Land Conservancy

Letter

Waukesha County Citizens Protecting Waukesha County's Remaining Natural Areas

Volume 18 No.1

April 2010

Annual Meeting at Red Circle Inn March 10, 2010



Peter Sparrow received recognition for his land donation.

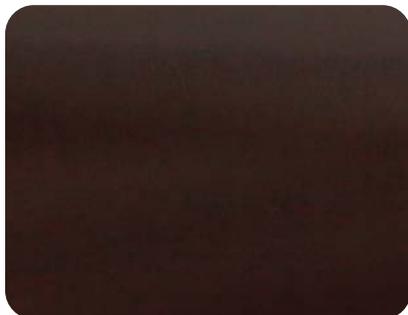


Bill Reichenbach of Wachtel Tree Service spoke about "Trees and Natural Landscaping."



Tony Meyer hosted a table at the Red Circle Inn.

Ronald and Barbara Poe at the Annual Meeting



Photos by
Gee Esslinger



Donna Meyer, Susan Esslinger and Mary Graves

Study Finds the Blue-Spotted Salamander Thriving on Conservancy's Properties

by Ellen Gennrich

Have you ever seen a blue-spotted salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*)? Few people have. Yet they seem to be a common amphibian in our part of the world. Of course this salamander does live part of its life in the water. And when not in water, it hides under rocks and logs in damp places during the day, only coming out at night to feed. Seems like a pretty good life pattern to avoid us, doesn't it?

This blue-black salamander has pale blue spots on its sides, tail and legs. It measures 3-5 inches in length. In Waukesha County it lives in hardwood forests adjacent to wooded swamps and ephemeral ponds - ponds that dry up for part of the year. This is crucial to the viability of the blue-spotted salamander. Ponds that are ephemeral do not harbor fish that would be predators of salamanders. Protecting uplands near these ponds is also vital, as the salamander lives much of its life on uplands. Biologist Marlin Johnson says, "A pat on the back to the Waukesha County Land Conservancy for protecting both ephemeral ponds and uplands around them."

As soon as the ice recedes from these ponds, adult blue-spotted salamanders enter the water. These adults must come to the water's surface to breath. The female blue-spotted salamander lays its eggs individually at the base of vegetation or stones in the water. When done laying eggs, these adult salamanders leave the pond for the rest of the year to feed on slugs, earthworms and insects. In summer the larvae hatch in the pond. At the larval stage these amphibians must live underwater. In fall, as adults, they move onto land, finding a damp and protected place to overwinter.

And how do we know that blue-spotted salamanders are thriving here? The Waukesha County Land Conservancy received a \$2000 donation from the Kettle Moraine Garden Club and matched it with a \$1000 grant from the Natural Resources Foundation to carry out an inventory of reptiles and amphibians on eight of our properties. The money is being used to enlist the services of an expert in herpetology (the study of reptiles and amphibians) to supervise volunteers and check identification of salamanders, frogs and snakes.

With the help of nine volunteers (and more are needed), we have been live-trapping salamanders at eight of the Conservancy's properties. The traps being used are wire mesh minnow traps that are shaped like two funnels. There is no bait involved. The traps are placed partially under-

water, preferably along a submerged log. They are left in the same place and checked once a day by the volunteers. If there are salamanders in the trap, they are counted and released. Once when checking a trap at the Ottawa Wildlife Refuge, volunteer Theresa Kennedy counted 52 blue-spotted salamanders in that single trap! It seems that this species is thriving here.

By the end of April, the salamander part of the herpetology inventory will be done. Through the summer Jason Dare, who is a skilled herpetologist, will be inventorying frogs by identifying their calls at various sites. Also starting now and into the summer, Marlin Johnson, the Conservancy's biologist, and Jason are looking for volunteers to "man" snake boards. These 2' x 4' boards were loaned to us by the DNR. They will be placed on our sites where various species of snakes will use them for cover. Our volunteers will be taught to identify these species and count the individuals. If you would like to volunteer to work on this interesting study, contact Marlin Johnson at 262-965-2227 or marlin.johnson@uwc.edu

Knowledge gained from the inventory will be used to guide future land management practices that Marlin Johnson says will help to ensure that the common species of "herps" on these properties remain common and the rare species remain stable. The results of the Conservancy's herpetology inventory will be reported in the fall 2010 Land Letter.



Blue-spotted salamander

Save Trees & Money for Land Protection

Would you like to receive your Waukesha County Land Conservancy "Land Letter" via your email? We would like to start sending as many newsletters as possible using this 21st century form of communication. This will save the Conservancy the money of printing and mailing, as well as saving trees somewhere in the world.

If you will send us your email address, we promise you it will NOT be given to anyone else for ANY reason – period. You will be able to view the same photos, read the same articles as in a printed copy. You can call WCLC's office at 262-821-2044 and give us your email address over the phone, or you can mail it to us (WCLC; PO Box 2572; Brookfield WI 53008), or you can send it via email to wclc@wi.rr.com

In the future, we will send more notices of what the Conservancy is doing to preserve and protect land in Waukesha County. We also hope you will report what you are seeing on our lands, so we can pass those sightings on to other members on a more regular basis – via email.

Please Consider a Membership With The Waukesha County Land Conservancy

Name: _____

9 \$35 Contributor

Address: _____

9 \$50 Sentinel

City: _____ St: _____ ZIP: _____

9 \$100 Guardian

E-Mail: _____

9 \$250 Steward

9 I am a member. I would like to give a gift membership to:

9 \$500 Conservator

9 I would like to make a gift in honor or in memory of:

9 \$1,000 Benefactor

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ ZIP: _____

9 Match this gift through my employer's Matching Gift

Payment by: 9 Check 9 Visa 9 Master Card

Name on Card: _____

Card Number: _____ Exp Date: _____

Amount: _____ Signature: _____

Please make checks payable to WCLC (Waukesha County Land Conservancy.) WCLC is a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Your gift is tax-deductable. All donors, unless directed "anonymous" will be listed in our annual donor recognition report.

Jan McKenna Leaves Board

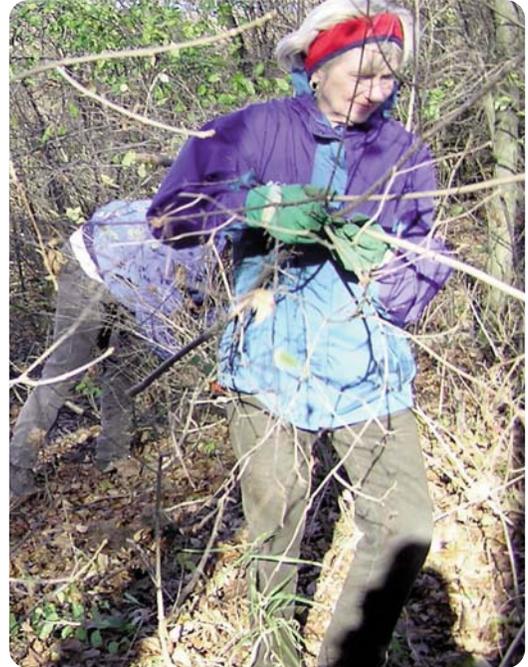
A dedicated, active Waukesha County Land Conservancy board member is "retiring" from the board. After serving since 2004, board member Jan McKenna is moving on. Many of you will remember meeting Jan at the Conservancy's Annual Meetings, which she has run for as many years. It is Jan who chose the Red Circle Inn as the venue for those meetings. Every year she finds the speaker and master of ceremonies, chooses the menu, communicates with the chef at the restaurant, assigns the tables, checks everyone in at the event, and hands out the name tags she has created.

At the Conservancy's board meetings, Jan is a thoughtful participant in all discussions - in addition to acting as secretary when our regular secretary is unable to attend. Jan has also been active at the Conservancy's work days, dragging brush into piles on the Conservancy's properties. But no doubt the biggest job in total hours that Jan has handled for the Conservancy is chairing the auction at our bi-annual fund-raising Galas. Fortunately for all of us - and for the cause of land preservation in our county - Jan has agreed to continue running the auctions.

Always an active volunteer in the community, Jan has also served as President of the board of the Milwaukee Public Museum, as President of the Kettle Moraine Garden Club and in her "spare" time, she works as a Master Gardener.

Now Jan has been invited to serve as a director on the board of the International Crane Foundation. Congratulations, Jan! But we will miss you.

Jan & Jim McKenna at 2010 Annual Meeting



Jan McKenna volunteered at work days as well as serving on the Board.



Prairie Trillium

Rare prairie trilliums are found in Martin's Woods and should be blooming when Marlin Johnson conducts a hike on May 16. See the last page of this newsletter for details.

Memorial Contributions

The Waukesha County Land Conservancy wishes to thank the many friends and families who made memorial donations in memory of:

Gina Hinman

Wayne Oberlin

We hope that the lands that WCLC preserves will serve as a fitting memorial to those individuals.

Land Letter



Waukesha County Land Conservancy

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Brookfield WI 53008

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Opportunities for Fun and Service

May 16th. 1:30 PM.

Wildflower Hike at Martin's Woods. Biologist Marlin Johnson will be our guide as we find rare red trilliums and a woodland carpeted with toothwort and wood anemones. Bring your camera for this spectacular spring show! As this is also migratory season for birds, you may wish to bring your binoculars as well. We will stay to visit over cider and cookies at the site after our hike. *On Edgewood Av, about 1 mile west of Hwy 164 on the north side of the Village of Big Bend. Parking is available in the first driveway west of the "Martin's Woods" sign.*

June 5th, 9:00 AM.

Service Day at Nelson's Oak Woods: Join the work party to pull non-native garlic mustard. After filling our garbage bags with invasive plants, we will visit with our fellow workers over a burger at the Bark River Yacht Club in Dousman.

We will meet our work boss, Marlin Johnson, about a mile south of downtown Dousman on Main Street at the second right angled curve. Park along the road near the "Nelson's Oak Woods" sign.