

# Land

Waukesha County Land Conservancy

# Letter

Waukesha County Citizens Protecting Waukesha County's Remaining Natural Areas

Volume 18 No.2

October 2010



Cooper Siepmann picking prairie grass seeds.



Jill Bedford, Gil and Lillian Boese, Neal O'Reilly and Mary Cullen (front) gather seeds which will be used to restore native prairie.



## Picnic on the Prairie

at UW-W Field Station Sept 11, 2010

Waukesha County Land Conservancy members enjoyed a day of gathering native seeds and touring the prairie with Marlin Johnson. This was followed by the picnic featuring locally grown foods prepared by the Board Members.

The picnic menu included lamb stew, bar-b-que, chicken, beans, salads and homemade apple pie.



# Report on Reptile and Amphibian Survey - 2010

by Marlin Johnson

Thanks to a lot of help from our friends, the Waukesha County Land Conservancy (WCLC) was able to conduct a reptile and amphibian survey on ten of its properties during spring and summer 2010. The “help” came in the form of seventeen eager volunteers and a generous \$2000 donation from the Kettle Moraine Garden Club and a \$1000 grant from the Natural Resources Foundation’s C.D. Besadney Conservation Grant. The money was used to hire the services of an expert herpetologist to design the study, instruct volunteers, check identifications and conduct some of the surveys.

Reptiles and amphibians are a part of nature that attracts our attention. Hearing the call of the first chorus frog is a welcome sign of the arrival of spring. Snakes also attract our attention but too often in a negative way. We tend to pass judgments on nature based on our prejudices but in truth, there is no right or wrong in nature.....it is as it is. WCLC is in the business of protecting ‘it as it is,’ therefore we want to ensure the survival of all the County’s natural communities and the creatures that make them up. A prerequisite to intelligent management is to know what we have. This survey is one step toward this goal.

The survey project began last February when we enlisted the help of 17 enthusiastic volunteers (see list). They ranged in age from 14 to 77. Kelly (14), Mary’s daughter, was in the 8th grade at St. Thomas Aquinas in Waterford; Eric and Tom were sophomores at Arrowhead High School in Hartland; Theresa was a home schooled sophomore from Rome in Jefferson County; Erik and Sarah

were sophomores at UW-Waukesha. Russ, Maureen, Dale and Marlin are retirees. Rachael, Jill, Mary, Ralph, Jason, Deb and Tim are middle agers with full time jobs(or temporarily out of work). All are nature lovers who willingly took time out of their busy schedules to help out.

Shortly after the melting of ice in the shallow ponds, Jason Dare (Dare Ecosystem Management, LLC) supervised the placement of minnow traps for the salamander survey. He instructed volunteers on sampling procedures and how to identify the species likely to be found. (Education was an important part of the survey.) Live specimens of questionable individuals were to be kept for verification purposes. Then all animals were released back into the pond. Traps were checked daily from March 15 until mid April. Conditions in these early days of the salamander survey were challenging. Water temperatures were in the high 30s and low 40s, cold enough to numb the hands. Occasional snowflakes were in the air. Mud and fallen branches made walking difficult in the ponds, but the valiant volunteers persisted. Frogs were also recorded based on actual observation or on their calls.



Theresa Kennedy holds two salamanders



Salamander Trap

No salamanders were found in the traps after April 10th. They had moved to the surrounding uplands after mating and laying eggs. Adults spent the rest of the year feeding on insects and worms in the leaf litter while their eggs hatched to larvae. The larvae fed and grew to adults during the next two months at which time they too moved to uplands. On April 13th the snake boards were laid out for the snake survey portion of the study. These boards are 2’X4’ pieces of ¾” plywood. Snakes are attracted to boards in the evening hours as a place to conserve body heat during the night. Volunteers were instructed on the identification of species they were likely to encounter. The boards were lifted and

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## Conservancy Joins Partners in NAWCA Grant

*by Nancy Gloe*

You may think that when the Waukesha County Land Conservancy (WCLC) buys an environmentally important piece of land with your donation, as good as that is, the story ends there. That's not necessarily so.

During the winter of 2010 the WI-DNR, WCLC, Ducks Unlimited, Waukesha County Parks, the SE WI Fox River Commission and the Waukesha County Conservation Alliance applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant to benefit the Mukwonago-Fox River watershed.

NAWCA is an international agreement that provides for the long-term protection of wetlands and associated uplands habitats needed by waterfowl and other migratory birds in North America. The Act provides matching grants to organizations and individuals who have developed partnerships to carry out wetlands conservation projects in the United States, Canada and Mexico. These grants require a partner match of no less than a 1-to-1 ratio.

WCLC's 96 acre Meldman tract, purchased in December of 2008 for \$225,000, was one of the parcels used as a match for the grant application. Several other Waukesha County Conservation groups also "partnered" in the application.

In September 2010 a cool \$1,000,000 grant was awarded to the initiative.

While the Mukwonago River watershed is rapidly developing, its ecological health remains intact, and it still contains numerous threatened and endangered species and excellent migratory bird habitat. The project will enhance 2,522 acres of wetlands and protect 1,631 acres close to or on the river including 607 acres of wetlands, 1,024 acres of associated uplands, 5.8 miles of river frontage, and 1.7 miles of undeveloped lake shoreline.

So...your contributions to WCLC will not only save our important natural areas here in Waukesha County. They will help save habitat for the migratory birds that transcend international borders when making their annual journeys across the North American continent and beyond.

Our migrating wood ducks and woodcocks, yellowlegs and yellowthroats thank you for your support!

### Planning for Gala 2011

WCLC's Special Events' Committee is in the initial planning stages for our next Gala to be held on September 9, 2011, on Crooked Lake.

The Gala will help WCLC acquire new members and additional funds toward the enhancement of our mission.

We will keep you updated on our Facebook page.

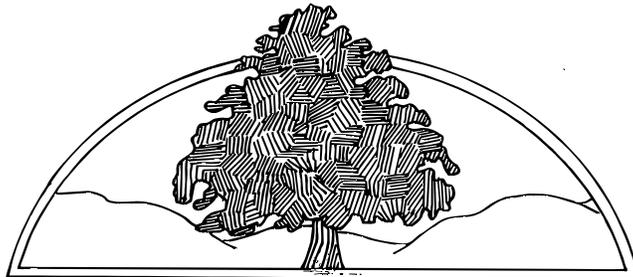
### Waukesha County Land Conservancy now has a Facebook page.

Keep informed of events as they happen and volunteer opportunities.

You can access our Facebook page at:

[www.facebook.com/waukeshalandconservancy](http://www.facebook.com/waukeshalandconservancy)





*Waukesha Land Conservancy*

***Please Consider a Membership With The  
Waukesha County Land Conservancy***

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ St: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

\$35 Contributor

\$50 Sentinel

\$100 Guardian

\$250 Steward

\$500 Conservator

\$1,000 Benefactor

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Match this gift through my employer's Matching Gift

Payment by:  Check  Visa  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.

## Survey Report

*(Continued from Page 1)*

checked for snakes before, or at, sunset 2-3 times a week until mid July.

By the end of the summer the seventeen volunteers had put in 235 hours in survey work on ten of our sites. They found:

- Tiger Salamander, Blue Spotted salamander and Newts
- Chorus Frog, Spring Peepers, Gray Tree Frog, Leopard Frog and American Toad
- Eastern Garter Snake, Red-bellied Snake, Brown Snake, Milk Snake and possibly a Plains Garter Snake



Marlin holds a Milk Snake.

In addition, many volunteers went beyond reptiles and amphibians and reported other animals they saw in the minnow traps: 2" long predaceous diving beetles and giant water bugs, leeches, crayfish, mud minnows and sticklebacks (These fish are predators on salamander and frog eggs. They sometimes get into shallow ponds during spring floods but die when the ponds dry out.) Besides snakes, the snake boards attracted meadow voles, deer mice, shrews, crickets and beetles.

Above and beyond awards should go to several individuals for extra efforts. Theresa put in the most hours (60) during the survey and had two great "WOW" experiences. One evening she found 15 eastern garter snakes under one board (WOW). Earlier she found 52 blue spotted salamanders in one minnow trap which had been emptied two days before (WOW). On their own initiative, Mary and her daughter Kelly took length measurements of all of the 30 salamanders they caught. Tom and Eric wrote up a several page report about their observations above and beyond the basic reporting form sheets. Maureen, Dale and Rachael identified 25 kinds of birds while they conducted their survey.

Although we did not find any rare animals in the survey, we now know we have good populations of the common species and must strive to keep them common. In our management efforts we need to keep shallow ponds with plants, fallen leaves and woody branches for successful salamander

and frog reproduction. We need adjacent uplands with shade, a thick leaf litter, rotting logs and rock piles for salamanders. We need semi- open areas for snakes and frogs.

A hardy thank you to all the people involved in this adventure: to the enthusiastic volunteers for suffering cold, heat and mosquitoes; to Jason Dare for suggesting the project and his expertise in carrying it out; to the Kettle Moraine Garden Club for their encouragement and generous donation; to the Natural Resources Foundation for selecting WCLC to receive the C.D. Besadney Conservation Grant; and finally to all our members who help preserve and manage a few islands of habitat for even some of the common, slimy and slithery creatures found in Waukesha County.

### List of volunteers:

Jill Bedford	Marlin Johnson
Ralph Curtis	Theresa Kennedy
Jason Dare	Rachael Lang
Russ Evans	Tim Putra
Tom Gavin	Erik Ruggies
Dale Gross	Deb Scharff
Maureen Gross	Eric Sutton
Kelly Hoffman	Sarah Yauke
Mary Hoffman	

### Memorial Contributions

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

**Gina Hinman  
Irwin Langer  
Richard Solomon**

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

Contributions were also received in honor of:

**Dean Herriges  
David Gennrich  
Riene Wells**

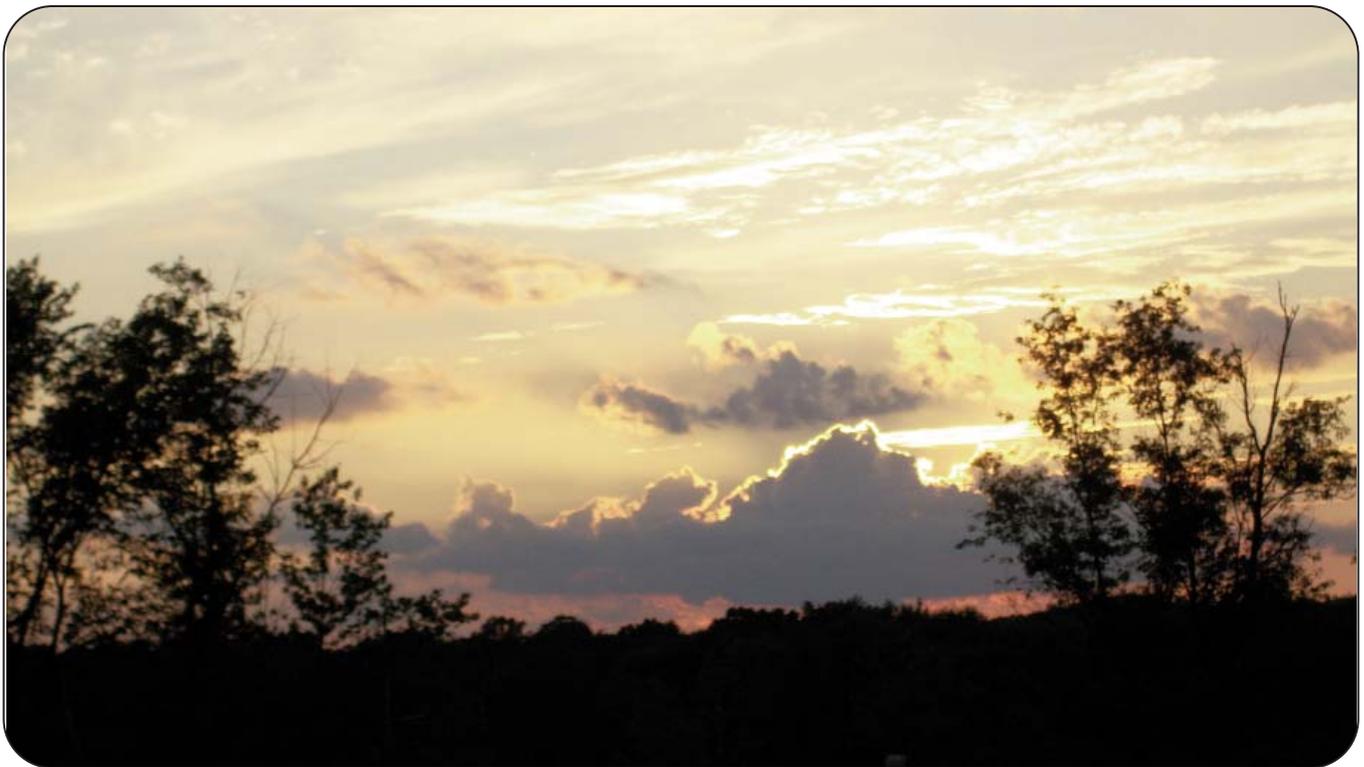
# Land Letter



*Waukesha County Land Conservancy*

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Sunset at Ottawa Wildlife Refuge