

# Land

Waukesha County Land Conservancy

# Letter

Waukesha County Citizens Protecting Waukesha County's Remaining Natural Areas

Volume 14 No.1

Apr 2006

## Scenes from the 2006 Annual Meeting



Jan Storck and Marlin Johnson at 2006 Annual Meeting



Susan Esslinger, Laurie Longtine and Reine Wells



Betty Kleimenhagen enjoys the party.

Some of the Board Members at the 2006 Annual Meeting



# WOLVES IN WAUKESHA COUNTY

The lands protected by the Waukesha County Land Conservancy are not large enough wilderness areas to provide habitat for timber wolves today, however, among the greatest annoyances and spine-tingling episodes related by early settlers were those involving wolves. Not only were wolves labeled as a threat to human life, but they were also costly in the toll of young livestock they killed. Pigs, sheep, calves and colts were threatened by wolves and had to be kept near buildings where they could be watched during the day and shut inside at night. Despite this care and vigilance, many domestic animals were lost.

Two kinds of wolves were found in Waukesha County when settlers arrived—the timber (gray) wolf (*Canis lupus*) and the coyote (*Canis latrans*). The larger timber wolf frequented heavily wooded sections of the county, while the coyote tended more toward open areas. Settlers were often impressed by the size of the timber wolf. Mrs. Melinda Weaver speaks of a wolf which had frightened her children in 1837:

"He was a much larger specimen of the wolf tribe than I had ever seen or heard descriptions. I had heard the largest kind that had been seen anywhere around there, described as the big grey wolf, all over grey but this one was dark grey and white spotted with large spots. (Author's note: It was probably molting.)" (1)

A second description of a very impressive specimen was given by Ida Martin, who told of a captured wolf which measured twelve inches across the forehead between the eyes and with legs sufficiently long to "stand right over an ordinary farm dog." (2) While there can be no mistaking the species implied by those two descriptions, there are numerous references which simply use the term 'wolves' with no further distinction being made. Presumably wolf stories recorded in early writing deal primarily with the timber wolf.

The coyote was much more plentiful and for this reason probably caused more livestock loss—especially of young animals in spring. The species, slightly larger than a fox, was not considered dangerous to humans (3). They were seldom seen but settlers were constantly reminded of their presence by their wild howls. Mrs. Melinda Weaver stated "...there was scarcely a night we could not hear the wild concert of their howling as it rang on the night air through the woods and openings..." (1)

Undoubtedly many dinner conversations centered around wolf stories and were probably retold many times before they were recorded in writing. It is likely that the facts have been mixed with fiction to make a better tale. People have always

placed wolves on a 'black list' and have emphasized their threat to humans. From childhood we have been taught that wolves are evil. Fairy tales such as "Little Red Riding Hood", "The Three Little Pigs", and "Peter and the Wolf" have instilled a negative attitude which is retained into adulthood. A human 'wolf' is a man who 'preys' on innocent females. With such ill feelings it is no wonder that even today wolves are considered evil. There is, however "no scientifically acceptable evidence available to support the claim that healthy wild wolves are dangerous to man." (4, page 291)

Although we can soften the actual threat wolves may have been to human safety, we cannot ignore the loss of precious livestock. As opportunists, wolves were quick to take advantage of defenseless domestic animals. To encourage the elimination of wolves, early settlers urged that bounties be paid for their scalps. In January, 1847, the Waukesha County Board passed a resolution stating: "That the bounty on wolf scalps of every description is hereby fixed and determined at \$3 each...." (5, page 42). Again in October of the same year, Eagle Township put a bounty of \$5 for each scalp. (5, page 64). Some unscrupulous hunters out-foxed the county clerk by turning in nearly as many ordinary dog scalps as wolf scalps. (3, page 624)



This bounty was not effective in deterring the loss of livestock, consequently local governments set a higher price on each scalp. The town of Summit in 1866 voted to pay \$10 per head for wildcats and lynx which they thought were killing their sheep. It was later discovered that wolves were the culprit and that their stamping grounds were on the school section (section 16) and around Genesee and Silver Lakes. The town raised the bounty to \$100 and the county added another \$25. No sooner had this bounty become set than hunting wolves became a good business. Hunting parties were formed and very soon wolves in Summit were

exterminated. Once again unscrupulous hunters took advantage of the situation by chasing wolves from adjoining localities into Summit to be killed. One particular wolf was pursued back and forth between Ottawa and Summit towns on sections 5 and 32 until he was shot in Ottawa and dragged over to Summit to die. (3, page 787)

This story was repeated in many townships throughout Wisconsin. By 1885 the timber wolf was eliminated from the southern part of the state. In 1974 the Federal Endangered Species Act listed the timber wolf as an Endangered Species. Wisconsin followed by listing it in 1975. Due to recent successful reintroductions in northern parts of the state, the status of the wolf was changed from Endangered to Threatened. This allows troublesome individuals to be shot by DNR personnel if they are known to have killed pets or livestock. Hunters and landowners cannot kill problem wolves. As of 2005, there were an estimated 455 timber wolves in the state.

While the population of coyotes is thriving in Waukesha County today, recent sightings and confirmed roadkills indicate that individuals from northern packs of timber wolves are migrating into southern Wisconsin including a Waukesha County. Wolves commonly disperse from their home packs during their second or third year of life, some apparently moving hundreds of miles. Documented road-killed wolves have been reported in Jefferson County near I-94 along the Rock River in 2001 (6); Dane County near Middleton in 2002 (7); and Waukesha County near Hwy 67

between Oconomowoc and I-94 in 2003 (7).

While it is unlikely, and probably not desirable, to have timber wolves return to Waukesha County, we in the Waukesha County Land Conservancy can hope to preserve some small segments of the greater wilderness they depend upon.

\*Adapted from an article with the same title written by Marlin Johnson for the Waukesha County Historical Society, appearing in their newsletter, LANDMARK Vol. 18, Summer-Autumn 1975, pages 6-10.

### References

- 1) Weaver, Melinda A., "Memories of Early Days by Mrs. Melinda Weaver, wife of John Weaver, one of the Earliest Settlers of the Town of Lisbon, Waukesha County, Wisconsin". Manuscript, 1876 (Waukesha County Historical Museum)
- 2) Martin, Ida, "Experiences of a Waukesha County Pioneer" (Waukesha County Historical Museum)
- 3) History of Waukesha County. Western Historical Company, Chicago. 1880
- 4) Mech, David. The Wolf: the ecology and behavior of an Endangered Species. Natural History Press, Garden City, N.Y. 1970
- 5) Record of the Board of Supervisors—Waukesha County, 1847 (Waukesha County Historical Museum)
- 6) Waukesha Freeman, March 15, 2001. "Wolf Found in Jefferson County"
- 7) Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel, May 10, 2003. "Wolves Appearing Near Metro Areas"

## WORKDAY SCHEDULE FOR SPRING/SUMMER 2006

Here is our new workday schedule for spring and summer 2006. Bring gloves. We'll work about 3-4 hours each session. Workdays are a great chance to see the preserves you have helped protect and learn about what the Waukesha County Land Conservancy is doing to manage them.

- Tours given upon request with or without staying to work.

### **MAY BIRD HIKE** at Steuer-McCauley Woods:

We are working with an expert birding guide to set a date and time. If you are interested, please contact Marlin Johnson by May 1st at 262 965-2227 for further information.

### **VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS:**

**Sunday May 14** Nelson Woods 1-4 pm, Help us pull Garlic Mustard.

**Saturday May 27** Eagle Centre Prairie 9-noon. Plant the prairie. Meet at the Eagle Centre House Bed and Breakfast driveway, located on Hwy 67, just south of Eagle.

**Sunday June 4th** Martins Woods 1-4 pm. Pull Garlic Mustard and Dames Rocket in this State Natural Area. Meet at the site located on Edgewood Ave, 1 mile west of Hwy 164 in Big Bend.

**Saturday June 24,** 1-4pm Eagle Centre Prairie. Eat raspberries and pull knapweed. See directions above.

**Saturday July 15th** 9-noon Eagle Centre Prairie. Pull Knapweed. See directions above.

Questions? Contact Land Manager Jason Dare at 262 391-0159 or Biologist Marlin Johnson at 262 965-2227

# HOT CHILI, COOL BLUES

Family Party  
Waukesha County Land Conservancy

Friday Evening, August 25, 2006

## SAVE THE DATE

Cut Here

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

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

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

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

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

**9** \$35 Contributor

**9** \$50 Sentinel

**9** \$100 Guardian

**9** \$250 Steward

**9** \$500 Conservator

**9** \$1,000 Benefactor

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

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.

## Protecting Your Land With A Conservation Easement

**T**he Waukesha County Land Conservancy protects some land through fee-simple ownership, while some is protected using a tool called a "conservation easement." A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and land trust (or government agency) that permanently limits a property's uses in order to protect its conservation values.

When you own land, you own many rights associated with it, such as the right to build structures, to harvest timber, to drill a well and so on. When you donate a conservation easement to a land trust you permanently give up some of those rights.

he has given up the right to place buildings on it. In some cases a conservation easement may apply to just a portion of the property, leaving the option of development open for the remaining part.

The Conservancy takes on the responsibility and the legal right to enforce the easement. If a future owner or someone else violates the easement – perhaps by erecting a building the easement doesn't allow – the land trust will work to have the violation corrected. The Conservancy usually asks for a donation from the easement donor to help offset the cost of future stewardship or legal expenses.



If you donate a conservation easement, the value of the easement usually can be treated as a charitable gift and deducted from income tax. The value of the easement for tax purposes is the difference between the land's value with the easement and its value without the easement. Also, because a conservation easement lowers the property's fair market value, it can also result in lower property taxes.

A conservation easement is a written legal agreement that is tailored to protect the land's conservation values and meet the financial and personal needs of the landowner.

All conservation easements that the Waukesha County Land Conservancy accepts permanently prohibit development of that property. The landowner continues to own his land. He can sell it. He has the continued private use of it. But

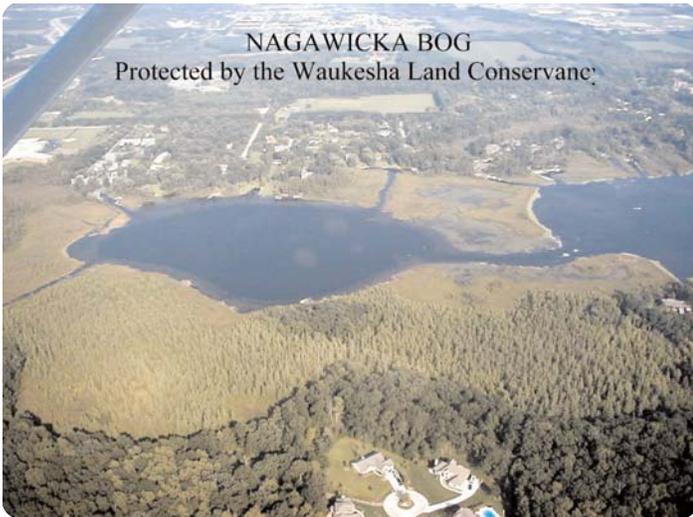
Currently the Waukesha County Land Conservancy holds 14 conservation easements protecting 450 acres. If it is your wish that your land forever remain undeveloped, and you would like a charitable donation for doing so, call the Waukesha County Land Conservancy at 262-821-2044.

# Land Letter



Waukesha County Land Conservancy  
P. O. Box 2572  
Brookfield WI 53008

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53149



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