



January/February 2011

# *The* HERON

Bimonthly Newsletter of the Fond du Lac County Audubon Society

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS



***Wednesday, January 12, 2011***

***7 pm, Moraine Park Technical College, Room O-103***

### **Photographing Nature**

***Speaker: Annette Boelk, Photographer***

*Wings and Wildlife in the Wetlands*

is a pictorial of over 200 photos of wetland fauna and wildlife. Each photograph educates about the habitat, survival skills, and unique beauty of wetland creatures.

Annette will give a presentation on wetland species and the adventures in photographing them. Signed copies of her book will be available for purchase, with proceeds benefitting Fond du Lac County Audubon Society.



***Wednesday, February 9, 2011***

***7 pm, Moraine Park Technical College, Room O-103***

### **Building and Planting a Rain Garden**

***Speaker: Roger Bannerman, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources***

Improve water quality by reducing runoff and improving the environment. Rain gardens reduce the amount of pollution reaching our rivers and streams by over 30%.

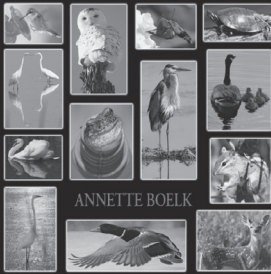
Native plants in rain gardens make a beautiful addition to the landscape and attract birds and butterflies.

*Audubon evening programs take place at Moraine Park Technical College. From National Avenue, turn into parking lot O. Enter the door labeled O-1. Room O-103 is on your left.*

*Audubon programs are open to the public with no admission charge. Adults, families, and young people with an interest in environmental issues are encouraged to attend.*

***Visit Us On the Web: [www.fdlaudubon.org](http://www.fdlaudubon.org)***

#### **WINGS AND WILDLIFE IN THE WETLANDS**



#### ***Thank You!***

Thank you to Ken and Bev Fisher for the delicious refreshments at the December meeting.

## ***Peebles Buckthorn Update***

The 2010 autumn sessions of buckthorn removal resulted in clearing a nice section along the Peebles Trail. Thanks to all who volunteered their time and energy to help improve the trail habitat. The weather cooperated and allowed us to work all nine of the scheduled sessions. This year there were 59 volunteer hours from a total of 14 volunteers. In comparison, last year the volunteer hours were only 20 from a total of seven volunteers, and less favorable weather.

Autumn is the time to target this plant. It is one of the last plants to drop its leaves and the sap is returning to the roots, which makes any poison application more effective. Very small buckthorn seedlings are pulled by hand. Medium size trees are levered out of the ground using a device called an extractigator with the assistance sometimes of a shovel. The soil is removed from the roots and these small trees are piled to make some brush pile habitat. Larger trees are girdled with an axe and a small amount of poison is applied to the chopped area. These are left standing to continue to provide habitat and eventually food for insects and birds. At the end of each session, the area is restored to a natural state by returning the soil and covering with leaf litter and sticks.



## ***Searl Property – Possible County Park***

The thirteen acres of land currently being considered in the Town of Byron as a county park is an example of ledge rock face with a northern exposure promising some unique plant communities. It is the type of rock that if purchased by a quarry it would likely be mined and shipped out of state for landscaping. The Town of Byron does not have any requirement to preserve the ledge as exists in the Oakfield Township.

Upland areas on top of the rock face contained abundant growth of large oak and hickory. Oaks are abundant and at least two different species of oak are present. Hickory appeared to be the Shagbark variety.

On the northern exposure of the rock we found maple. Basswood was found throughout. There was evidence of Jack in the Pulpits below the rock face. This may indicate that other ephemerals are also present in the spring of the year.

There is a spring that trickles out from the rock face and creates a small creek flowing to the east on the northeastern quadrant of the property.

There are key reasons for preservation and development as a county park such as the following:

- Preservation of a unique feature of our county.
- Preservation from commercial use that would possibly destroy all of the rock face.
- Proximity to the City of Fond du Lac and the citizens there who wish to escape the city to enjoy nature, get active outdoors or walk their dog.
- Preservation of vegetation that existed here 150 to 200 years ago in a natural state.
- Easy access to the south of Fond du Lac along a main artery, Hwy. 175.

The Education, Agriculture and Recreation Committee approved the ordering of an appraisal for the Searl property at their December meeting. This is just the first step of several that needs to be completed before the recommendation is made by the EAR Committee to the County Board of Supervisors to purchase this property.

Park Watch of Fond du Lac requests the support of Fond du Lac Audubon Society members in urging County Board supervisors to allow this park and preservation of a piece of “our” ledge to be preserved for future generations.

—Laura DeGolier

## ***High School Prairie Restoration***

Environmental Science students at Fond du Lac High School recently completed a six-acre prairie restoration and corrected erosion problems around the school's east pond. The land, surrounding a water retention pond created to collect run-off and house the school's geothermal heat exchange system, was filled with weeds, invasive species, and erosion gullies. Mrs. Winter and her classes in 2009-2010 envisioned restoring the school grounds to a natural and native Wisconsin prairie. Mrs. Winter and four class leaders applied for a State Farm Insurance "Youth Advisory Board" Grant in the Environmental Responsibility category in Fall 2009. In February 2010, Fondy High received a grant from State Farm Insurance for \$47,613 to fund the large prairie restoration project and develop the area as an outdoor education site. The prairie project provides education on land stewardship and prairie restoration. The grant included funding to correct erosion problems, eliminate invasive species, seed six acres of native prairie, and create an outdoor education center for students and community members. Students in the Environmental Science classes designed a trail. Grading and rock placement was done by John Giese Enterprises of Fond du Lac. Students seeded a two-acre area with native prairie seed from Prairie Nursery (Westfield, Wisconsin). Environmental Science classes teamed up with classes at Lakeshore Elementary to include them in the project. Students hand-seeded two acres of prairie, with the remainder seeded with a mechanical Brillion seeder. Benches for amphitheater seating were constructed and installed by students in the school's Construction Academy under teacher Nate Lehman. Thirteen additional Leopold benches constructed by students under the direction of teachers Eric Chia and Todd Chirhart, will be installed in the spring around the ponds. FHS is proud of this project that teaches students and the community that restoring a native habitat is beneficial for wildlife, student learning, and sustainability.

Fond du Lac High School was the first school in Wisconsin to have a geothermal heat exchange pond loop system. The geothermal system was installed when the school was built in 2001 as an efficient, cost effective, and environmentally-conscious way of heating and cooling the school. Students are designing interpretive signs which will provide information

about prairie ecosystems and the geothermal system. These permanent signs will be put in place in the spring. A Grand Opening Celebration Event for students and the community will take place in the spring of 2011.

There is currently a need for funding for the manufacture and installation of the permanent signs (graffiti-proof). Grant funds have run out. Anyone interested in supporting this project with a monetary donation for the signage, please contact Margie Winter at Fond du Lac High School (929-2740). All donors to the project will be recognized on the signs.

## **WORKSHOP & FIELD TRIP**

### ***Natural Landscaping Workshop***

**Saturday, January 15, 12:30-4 pm, Moraine Park Technical College, Room O-104**

Audubon's Natural Landscape Workshop is back for the third year in a row. If you are curious about how to naturalize your backyard, then come to this workshop. The basics of creating a naturalized backyard will be introduced by Ted Eischeid, Theisen science teacher. During the workshop, you will prepare a development plan for your yard based on your personal objectives. You will then sketch a plan proposal using a scaled map of your property and devise a time line for completing your project. Come prepared with the dimensions of your property and any buildings on the site. You will leave with a plan, knowledge, and resources to make your yard the natural paradise you have always desired! This workshop is limited to 20 people. Contact Diana Beck (920-9731 or [dbeck7931@charter.net](mailto:dbeck7931@charter.net)) for a reservation. If you have reserved a spot and are unable to attend, please call to cancel so others may attend.

### ***Yaktrax, Hike, or Snowshoe***

**Thursday, February 3, 1 pm, East Branch of the Fond du Lac River (Diana Beck, facilitator)**

Don your winter foot gear and meet Diana at the East Greenway on the west side of the Pick N' Save parking lot on Pioneer Road. Explore the river as it meanders south. Watch for signs of wildlife and see what Fond du Lac looks like from the river in wintertime. If the river isn't safe for walking, Diana will lead a hike along the East Greenway trail.





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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

## THE HERON

Fond du Lac County  
**AUDUBON**  
S O C I E T Y  
**M E M B E R S H I P**

- ☐ **Yes!** I want to become a member or renew my membership to the National Audubon Society, and the Fond du Lac County Chapter. The annual membership dues of \$40 entitle me to six issues of the Audubon magazine, and all local chapter benefits. I am enclosing a check payable to Fond du Lac County Audubon.
- ☐ I am only interested in being a member and supporting the programs of the Fond du Lac County Audubon. The annual local membership dues of \$20 entitle me to receive the chapter newsletter and all chapter benefits. I am enclosing a check payable to Fond du Lac County Audubon.

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Fond du Lac County Audubon, Membership Services  
W4148 Kiekhaefer Parkway, Fond du Lac, WI 54937

### ***Renew Membership Locally***

We encourage local members to renew through our chapter, even for national membership. All of us receive mailings from the National Audubon urging us to renew and support their programs. The problem is that only \$2.50 of the dues is returned to the local chapter. This amount does not even begin to pay for the newsletter, much less anything else. We still encourage people to support the National office, but let our chapter send the \$20 portion on. This allows us to keep \$20 for our expenses. Other Audubon groups in Wisconsin are following this policy as well.

### ***Audubon Board Meeting on January 5***

The Audubon Board will meet on January 5 in the cafeteria at MPTC at 7 pm. The main subject will be updating our constitution. All members are welcome to attend board meetings.

### ***Great Backyard Bird Count February 18-21, 2011***

Participate as a citizen scientist by counting birds in your yard for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count. Check the website: [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc) for instructions and details. The website includes a "Learn About Birds" section that can help a beginning birder to contribute successfully.