

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Share your talent and creativity with West Wisconsin Land Trust! Do you have an interest in writing or photography? Would you like to help with office work or outreach events? We appreciate our volunteers who sustain WWLT's conservation work. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, contact Jennifer Dippel at (715) 235-8850 or [jdippel@wwlt.org](mailto:jdippel@wwlt.org).



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Join today and help preserve farms and natural areas for generations to come!

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## E-NEWSLETTER

*e-newsletter*  
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**WEST WISCONSIN  
LAND TRUST**

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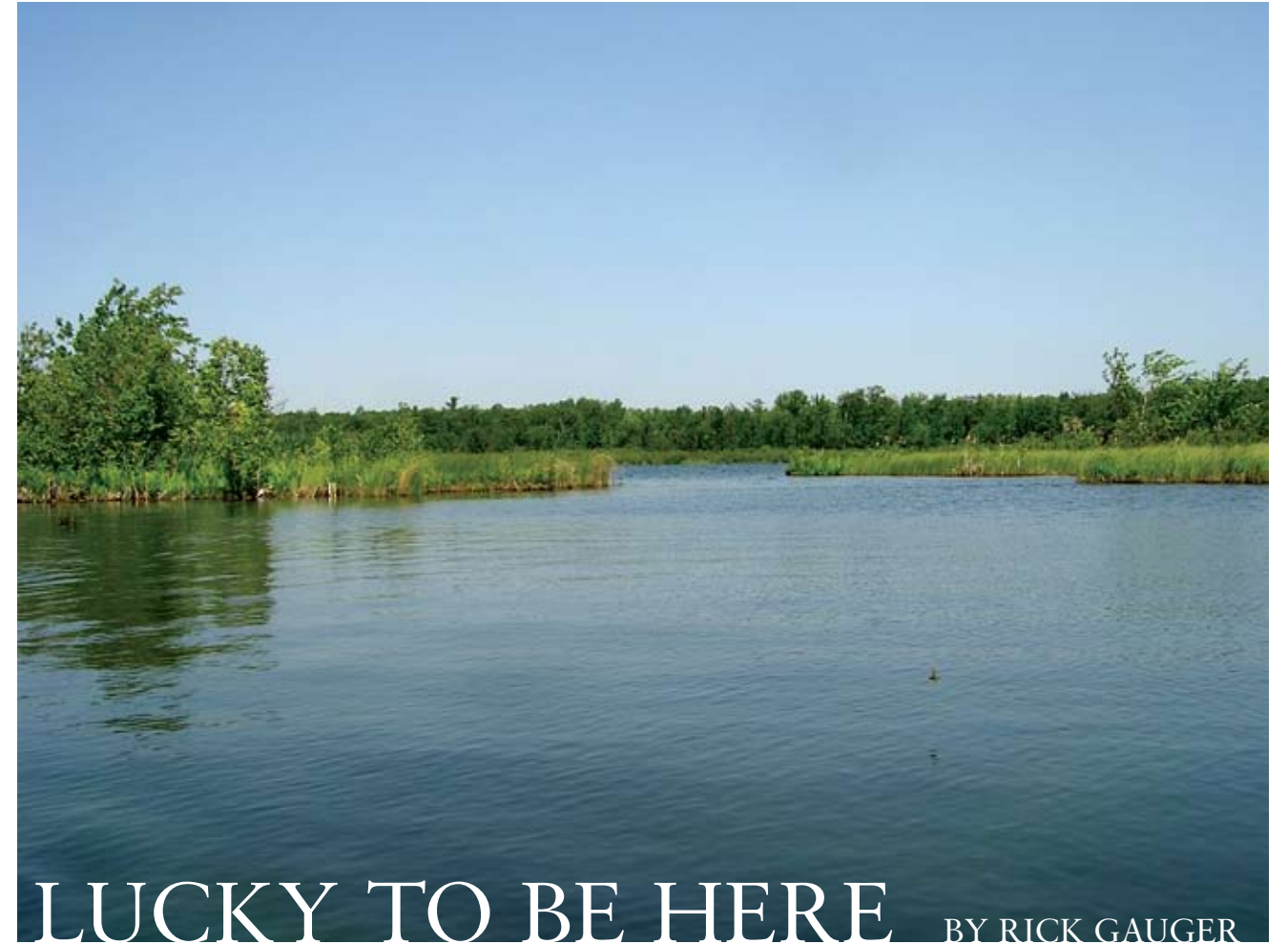
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**WEST WISCONSIN  
LAND TRUST**

# OPEN SPACES

FALL 2007 | VOLUME 11, NUMBER 2



## LUCKY TO BE HERE BY RICK GAUGER

From his office, high above Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago, you might think that Rich Kracum has a view of his land, 400 miles away, in Chippewa County, Wisconsin. And indeed he does, a view coming straight from his heart to a place his wife's family has loved for generations.

It's not often that a family will undertake a land protection strategy that rivals the entire work of a land trust organization. This is an effort that requires years of commitment, uncommon vision, single-minded focus, and determination. And that is exactly what Rich and Laura Kracum, and their two sons, John and James, have achieved over the past seven years.

The Kracum family lake protection priority area is

comprised of the land and numerous lakes in and around Herde Lake, near New Auburn, Wisconsin. Herde Lake is part of lower Long Lake, and closely resembles a lake in the Quetico (primeval Canadian wilderness). A lake-studded wilderness with winding ridges, walled lake plains, hummocks composed of diamicton, kettle lakes, and outwash plains, this area was overlooked for years by vacationers and developers, until recently. Now, all lakes in Wisconsin are under tremendous development pressure, even lakes that were previously considered too small-scale.

Herde Lake is bordered on the south by one of the nine parks that make up the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve. Nowhere else in North America are the vestiges of the Wisconsin glaciation as continued on page 6



## WEST WISCONSIN LAND TRUST

### OPEN SPACES

is published by West Wisconsin Land Trust, a private, nonprofit land trust organization, dedicated to preserving western Wisconsin's natural character.

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## Noteworthy

### Membership Privacy

Members and donors who wish to remain anonymous and *not* have their names listed in the Land Trust's Annual Report (spring 2008) can request to be listed as Anonymous by contacting Anne Annis at (715) 235-8850 or [www.wwlt.org](http://www.wwlt.org). Please visit the WWLT website to learn more about our privacy policy: [www.wwlt.org/privacy.shtml](http://www.wwlt.org/privacy.shtml).

### Welcome New Staff

#### Stewardship Manager: Bill Hogseth



From hiking the Appalachian Trail to being a ranger in the Boundary Waters, Bill has always enjoyed being out on the land. A self-professed "plant geek" with a degree in ecological restoration, Bill is responsible for monitoring the WWLT easement-protected properties. Bill is a newlywed, whose list of favorites includes his wife Crystal as well as cooking, reading, and hiking.

#### Coordinator of Special Projects: Nancy Toedt

Nancy came to West Wisconsin Land Trust in August. She is working on a project in cooperation with the National Park Service to update the information on scenic easements within the Wisconsin side of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Nancy has a B.A. from



Augsburg College, and lives with her husband John on 80 acres in Pepin County, where they are busy planting trees and establishing native grasses and flowers.

#### Education and Stewardship Project Specialist: Jennifer Dippel



Working towards her B.S. in conservation biology, Jennifer is certified in wildlife immobilization, and has worked as a High Adventure instructor. Jennifer is a native of White Bear Lake, Minnesota, and will be assisting the WWLT Education and Stewardship programs through AmeriCorps service (see page 15). Jennifer's interests include birding, scrapbooking, hiking, and any activity that can be done outdoors.

## END PIECES

### What Is AmeriCorps?

By Jennifer Dippel

AmeriCorps is a program that places members throughout the country, to work with sponsors (such as West Wisconsin Land Trust) to meet the education, public safety, health and environmental needs of communities. Each member of AmeriCorps dedicates a year of intensive service to mobilize volunteers, strengthen and expand the sponsor's programs, and aide the sponsors in their efforts to meet the needs of the community.

To further career goals (such as conservation officer) and to prepare them for future positions, AmeriCorps members learn valuable skills and training while serving. Training may include prescribed burning, CPR, wilderness first aid, grant-writing, and species identification, to name a few. Members are also asked to perform a Community Action Project.

The new Wisconsin Natural Heritage Corps, a program within AmeriCorps, focuses on environmental issues throughout the state. AmeriCorps members have been placed with non-profit and public agencies to help these organizations in their efforts to meet the critical needs of the environment, and to enhance their volunteer programs. Each member of the Natural Heritage Corps has a desire to conserve and sustain the environment for future generations, and to give back to communities through service.



### The AmeriCorps Pledge

- I will get things done for America-to make our people safer, smarter and healthier.
- I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities.
- Faced with apathy, I will take action.
- Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground.
- Faced with adversity, I will persevere.
- I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond.
- I am an AmeriCorps member and I will get things done.

## Birkie fever



Waiting for snow? Would you like to ski the Birkebeiner next February? West Wisconsin Land Trust is a proud Associate Sponsor of the American Birkebeiner 51K ski race in Hayward, Wisconsin.

We will give a free race entry to the first five people who become members or renew their WWLT membership, with a gift of \$250 or more. (You have your choice of skiing the 51K Birkie race or the 23K Kortelopet.) Join WWLT Executive Director Rick Gauger in skiing America's most exciting cross-country ski marathon! Questions? Call the WWLT office at (715) 235-8850.

For more information on the race, visit [www.birkie.com](http://www.birkie.com).

Photos courtesy of American Birkebeiner.



# Community Members Oppose Strip Mine

By Judith Housman

On a brisk winter evening in January 2007, one hundred people gathered at Tainter Town Hall to hear about plans for a sand mine in Dunn County. The news was shocking: a 360-acre site for an open-pit silica sand mine and processing plant was proposed, about a quarter-mile from the Hoffman Hills State Recreation Area. The proposal came from Texas-based Proppant Specialists, LLC. Proppant is interested in surface strip mining for silica.

As concerned citizens, we banded together to form a group called *Save Our Hills*.

We have done extensive research and meet regularly. Our group is a cross-section of teachers, farmers, engineers, secretaries, lawyers and retirees. We are actively opposing the sand mine through phone calls, our internet website, letters to the editor, television and radio interviews, and contact with Wisconsin's elected officials.

The Town of Tainter Board, the Town of Red Cedar Board, and the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have all voiced their opposition to the proposed silica sand mine. Surface mining is highly controversial because it puts immense pressure on our natural resources, raises serious health concerns (such as silica dust and fumes), is a major disruption to community life, and changes the landscape forever. Strip mining activities such as crushing, drilling and blasting will not only create a tremendous amount of noise in the area, it will change the view from Hoffman Hills' observation tower as the hills are flattened.

Topography, vegetation, water and wildlife will all be impacted. Roads must be rebuilt to withstand the heavy truck traffic around the sand mine. How will this affect Hoffman Hills, a stunning natural area that, according to the DNR, brings in \$1.5 million tourism dollars annually?

To operate a silica sand mine in the Town of Tainter, Proppant Specialists, LLC must obtain a special exception permit from the Dunn County Zoning Board of Adjustment (BOA). The October hearing was postponed, and a rescheduled **public hearing will be held either November 26 or November 27 at 5:00 p.m. at the Dunn County Judicial Center.** The notice will be published in the *Dunn County News* and on our website.

Air pollution. Noise pollution. Watershed damage. Wildlife habitat disturbed. Beautiful, verdant hills blasted apart and destroyed. Proppant has stated that, once this sand mine is open, up to 100 more sites are possible, from LaCrosse to Chetek.

Proppant has tried to pacify residents' concerns regarding health and environmental issues, but our research supports the dramatic and irrevocable change that will occur once this sand mine begins operation. Proppant Specialists, LLC, can put lipstick on their pig—but it is still a pig!

For more information on how you can get involved, please call Gerald Lausted at (715) 308-9954 or visit [www.saveourhills.net](http://www.saveourhills.net).



several members of Save Our Hills: (left to right) Jack Tritt, Juanita Meyer, Harland Meyer, Gerald Lausted, Dick Berger, Gloria Berger, Judith Housman, Ken Lestrud, Terri Nerison and Loren Nerison.



# All We Do Is Partner

"Inform, facilitate, partner and protect" is the tag line of West Wisconsin Land Trust. It's a process that leads from information dissemination to permanent protection of sensitive lands in western and northwestern Wisconsin. Lately, though, it seems that all we do is partner—that the pendulum has swung from informing and facilitating singularly to collaborating through dynamic partnerships. Each story in this newsletter displays a different type of partnership, resulting in land being saved, habitat being protected, or children being enlightened about conservation.

Partnerships work! Whether it's the National Park Service, Defenders of Wildlife, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Chippewa County Land Conservancy, the Town of Red Cedar in Dunn County, Trout Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Xcel Energy, private landowners or others, our partners help us accomplish things we could never do on our own. Without this synergetic cooperation, most of our current land conservation would cease, because partnerships leverage broad-based support.

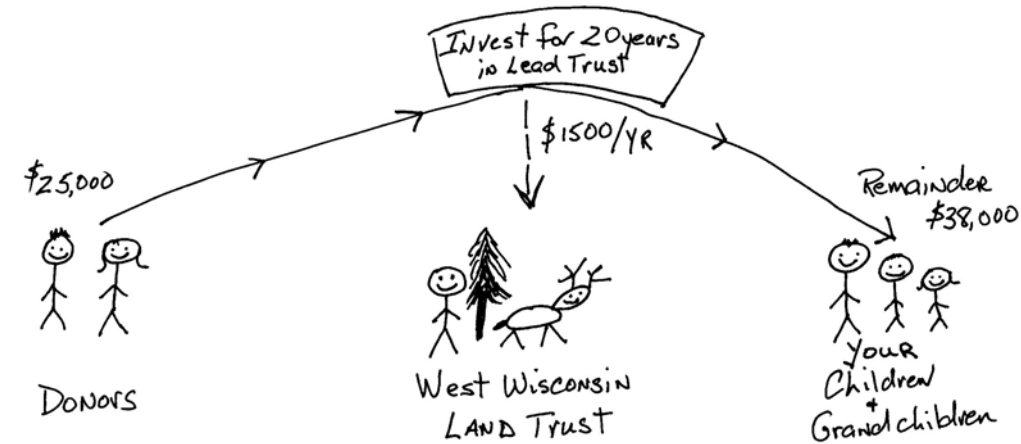
By far and away, our most important partnership is with *you*, our members and volunteers. It's you who get the word out, you who set the tone, you who infuse us with passion because you care enough to continue your membership support. All we really do is partner with you to promote and strengthen land conservation.

This is the time of year when the West Wisconsin Land Trust Board of Directors and staff gets out to visit with as many members as we can. We visit to personally thank you, to get your input on the organization and the wild places you care about, to listen and gain new ideas, and to encourage you to give financially during this crucial last quarter of the year.

Please continue your partnership with West Wisconsin Land Trust. Together, we will leave a lasting legacy for generations to come.

## Doubling Your Investment in Your Children's (Grandchildren's) Future

Parents and grandparents, did you know that you could invest in conservation while saving for your children's college fund? This is a real win-win planned giving tool.



West Wisconsin Land Trust works with several community foundations, and professional investment managers. I would be glad to put you in touch with them, and/or customize a proposal for you as you explore the benefits of a planned gift. There are many creative giving opportunities that will allow your dollars to do double duty in the lives of the next generation.



By Richard E. Gauger

Executive Director

"...our most important partnership is with you..."

# Nights are Neat!

By Bill Dingwall

With fall soundly upon us, the nights are getting shorter, and the nocturnal world is creeping back into our daily lives. Many people dread this time as they equate darkness with spending evenings locked inside their homes. No more evening walks, no more campfires, just the omnipresent hum of light bulbs. What's worse, many people, especially children, are truly afraid of the dark. Why?



Humans are highly dependent upon vision for survival. Once the sun goes down, they lose the ability to see navigational benchmarks, tumble-inducing roots and rocks, or even those ferocious man-eating animals that lurk behind every tree. Additionally, books, movies, and spooky campfire stories often drive home the thought that "darkness is dangerous." This combination of biology and culture can make the night a truly terrifying time. However, the night can also be fun, especially when experienced with friends.

"BAT!...moth...BAT!...moth...He got me!" So goes a round of Bat-Moth Tag, a game that demonstrates echolocation, during a WWLT night hike. This game, based on Marco Polo, is an example of a fun and safe way to get people outside and accustomed to the night.

Other night hike activities include walking silently in order to "see" with your ears and feet, telling a Native American story by candlelight with one eye closed in order to learn more about night vision, and the ever popular "Sparky Party," where Lifesavers are used to create sparks in a partner's mouth. Invariably, adults and children have a good time while learning something new.

Getting children into the nocturnal world while having fun is key to overcoming their ingrained fears. They use their senses in new ways, hear and understand new sounds, and develop a knowledge base through their own experiences, instead of making assumptions about the night from scary stories. Step-by-step, hour-by-hour, as more time is spent in the starlight, their confidence grows and a new nocturnal world opens up for them.

You are welcome to join one of the upcoming hikes and experience this for yourself. As one fifth-grader said, "Nights are neat!"

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

### Outdoor Survival

**November 10**  
**1:00 – 3:00 p.m.**  
**Pine Creek watershed**  
**near Maiden Rock, call (715) 235-8850**  
**for specific location**

Come out to the banks of Pine Creek, and learn the basics of outdoor survival. We'll touch upon wild edibles, shelters, getting water, and prioritizing your activities. You'll even get a chance to practice starting fire with flint and steel strikers.

### Night Hike

**December 8**  
**6:30 – 7:30 p.m.**  
**Maiden Rock Bluff State Natural Area,**  
**Maiden Rock**

&

**December 15**  
**6:30 – 7:30 p.m.**  
**Hoffman Hills State Recreation Area, near**  
**Menomonie, Main parking lot**

Discover the nocturnal world as we use our senses to explore the night. We'll "see" with our feet and ears, echolocate a moth via modified Marco Polo, and even find partners with our noses. Leave with your breath Wint-O-Green fresh from a "sparky-party," and take home new activities for sleep-overs.



## Safeguarding Silkesnas Preserve, from page 12



of land all around us being changed, altered, and developed," said Rob. "We felt we needed to make a stand to preserve this place."

Silkesnas is located in the northern-most fingers of the driftless area in west central Wisconsin. Cold springs that start at Silkesnas trickle down through a densely wooded coulee and become Burkhart Creek, part of the Burkhart watershed. Adjacent to Silkesnas is a 100-acre property that West Wisconsin Land Trust conserved in 2006, and within a half-mile of that, is a 200-acre parcel conserved by West

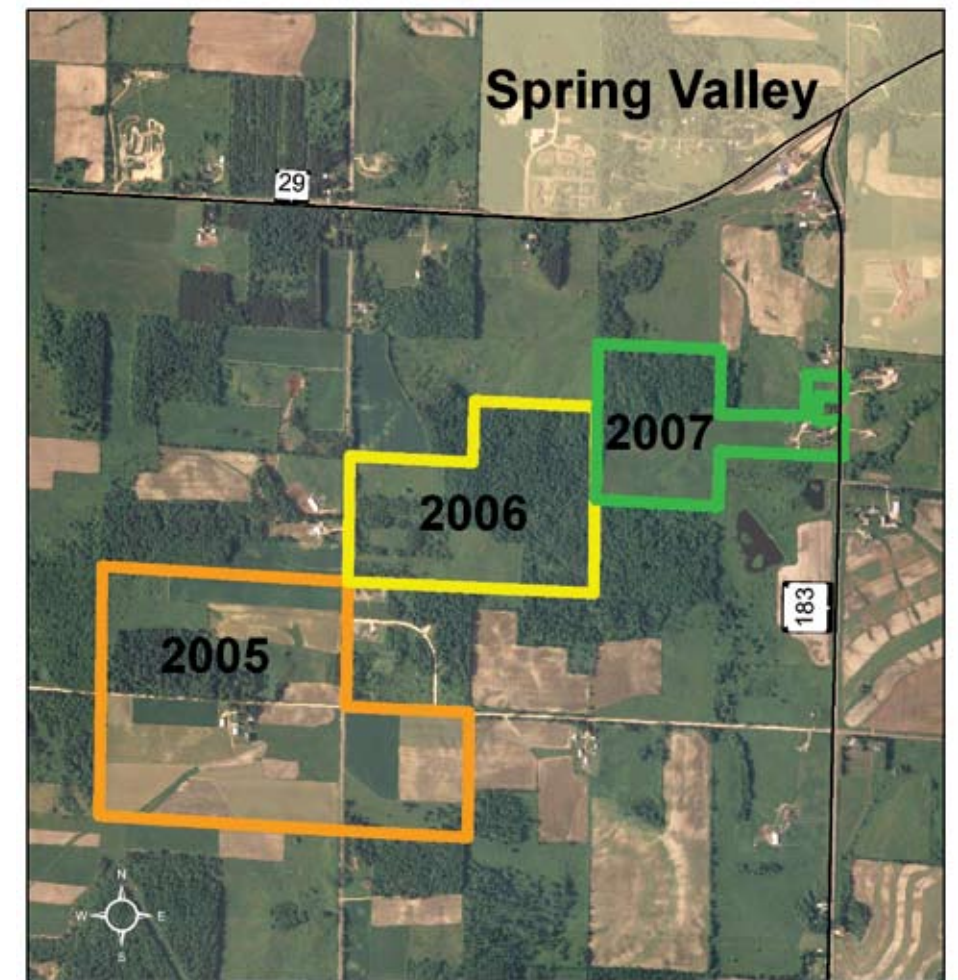
Wisconsin Land Trust in 2005. These three parcels of land, totaling 365 acres, provide a nearly unbroken corridor for wildlife habitat.

Presently, Silkesnas is open to the public on Earth Day and at select times throughout the year. The Petersons offer workshops and environmental activities such as Plant a Tree/Take a Tree, Earth Art and Garbology. They like to emphasize not only the natural qualities of the land, but the spiritual qualities as well, and have created a labyrinth on their prairie. Labyrinths are as old as civilization itself and have been used by many cultures. Walking the labyrinth is a way to focus the mind, solve problems and contemplate life in its many facets.

For the Petersons, Silkesnas is a part of their bigger retirement plans. The Petersons' aim is to demonstrate, by example, good land stewardship and help educate others about the wonders, beauty and importance of protecting our natural world. For more information about Silkesnas, contact Rob Peterson at [robp@integral-consult.com](mailto:robp@integral-consult.com).

facing page:  
 One of the cold springs that originates in the Silkesnas Preserve.  
 Inset: Rob and Lori Peterson

this page  
 top: some residents of the preserve  
 right: Adjacent to Silkesnas is a 100-acre property that West Wisconsin Land Trust conserved in 2006, and within a half-mile of that, is a 200-acre parcel conserved by West Wisconsin Land Trust in 2005. These three parcels of land, totaling 365 acres, provide a nearly unbroken corridor for wildlife habitat.





## Safeguarding Silkesnas Preserve

By Eric Hatling



Rob and Lori Peterson want you to come and take a walk in Silkesnas. The pastoral-sounding name fits their land: 65 acres of gently rolling hills, woods, pasture and restored prairie in Pierce County. The name originates from Rob's ancestral family farm in Sweden, a farm that still exists today. When Rob and Lori moved here from the Twin Cities in 1995, they wanted an idyllic place to live that would also reflect their concern for the sanctity of the land. With much work and care, and through the restoration of prairie on previous pastureland, they have demonstrated good land stewardship and created a wonderful environmental teaching tool: Silkesnas Preserve.

In keeping with the Petersons' vision of Silkesnas was the decision to permanently protect their land through a conservation agreement with West Wisconsin Land Trust. "We saw neighboring parcels [continued on page 13](#)

## Saving the Cut-off

By Rick Remington

Outdoor enthusiasts have long appreciated a secluded bend of the Red Cedar River, which flows between Lake Menomin and Tainter Lake. Known locally as "the Cut-off," this backwater channel of the river flourishes with abundant and diverse wildlife. The Cut-off is a popular destination for ice fishing when the bluegills are on. Its secluded sloughs offer a duck hunter's paradise, and its quiet waters give canoeists and boaters a reason to pause and admire the natural beauty.

When the former Edgewater Acres campground sold for lakeshore development, the historic river access was all but lost. West Wisconsin Land Trust provided the leadership impetus for a large coalition of businesses, sporting groups, and conservation and environmental agencies and organizations to purchase the adjacent Cut-off parcel, using a variety of grants and funding sources.

"There are those who try to pit traditional sporting clubs against environmental organizations, and that is just plain foolish," commented Rick Gauger, executive director of West Wisconsin Land Trust. "In Wisconsin, our legacy is that of conservation and cooperation. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program gives testimony to how we preserve our state's significant natural resources. This is exactly the type of project that the Stewardship Program was designed for: public access, strong local interest, hunting and fishing traditions, and high ecological integrity."

Purchase of the Cut-off not only restores public access to the river, it further protects 100 acres of woods, wetlands and wildlife habitat on the property itself. Future plans may include parking, low-impact river access, signage and development of a resource management plan.

Dunn County resident and Pheasants Forever member Pat Lammer noted, "This is a fantastic piece of property to preserve as a



wildlife refuge. It has always provided some of the best duck hunting on the river, and there is tremendous wildlife viewing opportunity. The fishing is also excellent, and I've enjoyed it for years."

The Cut-off is now safe from development and is open to the general public for fishing, hunting, hiking, birding and other light recreational uses. However, contributions are still needed to finance the remainder of the purchase deficit. Please consider making a financial gift to the Red Cedar Cut-off Acquisition Fund. Your gift will help conserve this important local resource for present and future generations.

West Wisconsin Land Trust extends special thanks to our committed Red Cedar Cut-off Acquisition Project

### Trip's End

By Tom Joy

Red evening sun reflects from the river—  
Paints us all at trip's end.  
Boats, cars, wet gear, conversation—  
Load up, change, drive home, friend with friend.  
Much spoken, much unspoken—  
Much felt, but left unsaid—  
And underneath it all, the river,  
Still roars in every head.

partners: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Xcel Energy, 3M, Tainter/Menomin Lake Improvement Association, Dunn County, Downsview Sportsman's Club, Chippewa Valley Sierra Club, Ducks Unlimited, Tainter Lake Sportsman Club, Dunn County Fish and Game Association, Colfax Sportsmen's Club, Red Cedar Pheasants Forever, Women's Pheasants Forever, Red Cedar Bass Masters, Dunn County Conservation Alliance, the Wagner family, and one special Anonymous donor.

## Lucky to Be Here, *from the cover*

evident as in the Chippewa Moraine. When the ice melted at the edges of the lobes, the sand, silt, cobbles, and boulders frozen in it were released, and formed ridges called moraines. Even as the glacier melted back, ice usually continued to flow toward its edge, bringing more debris with it.

Occasionally, the flow stopped, the ice stagnated, and blocks of ice detached from the glacier were buried in debris. The lakes of the Chippewa Moraine lie in the depressions formed by the melting of the buried ice. These are called kettles.

These lakes and the lands surrounding them are the gems that the Kracums are saving. The family has already permanently protected 663 acres of land, 14,800 feet of shoreline, 120 acres of marsh, and 10 wild lakes.

The family is in the process of protecting 725 additional acres, 23,547 more feet of shoreline, another 80 acres of marsh, and 10 more lakes.

That's an incredible 7.3 miles of shoreline on 20 lakes, spread over 1,380 acres of land that is contiguous, and connected to the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve.

Rich's wife, Laura, and her family of origin have decades of happy memories on the lake. Laura's grandfather, Judge Orrin Larrabee, first purchased a home on Herde Lake in 1952. Years later, the home passed to his daughters, Elizabeth (Laura's mother) and Louise. As a child, Laura spent almost every summer there on the lake, with her cousins, aunts and uncles. So naturally, when Barker's Island became available, Laura motored over in a little fishing boat, took Polaroid pictures, and said, "We'll buy it."

Following the family tradition, Rich and Laura continue to spend their summer days on the lake, from the Memorial Day party at Max's Grill, to the waning end of the season on Labor Day, with their sons dropping in from college to join them.

Laura said of her sons, "The full

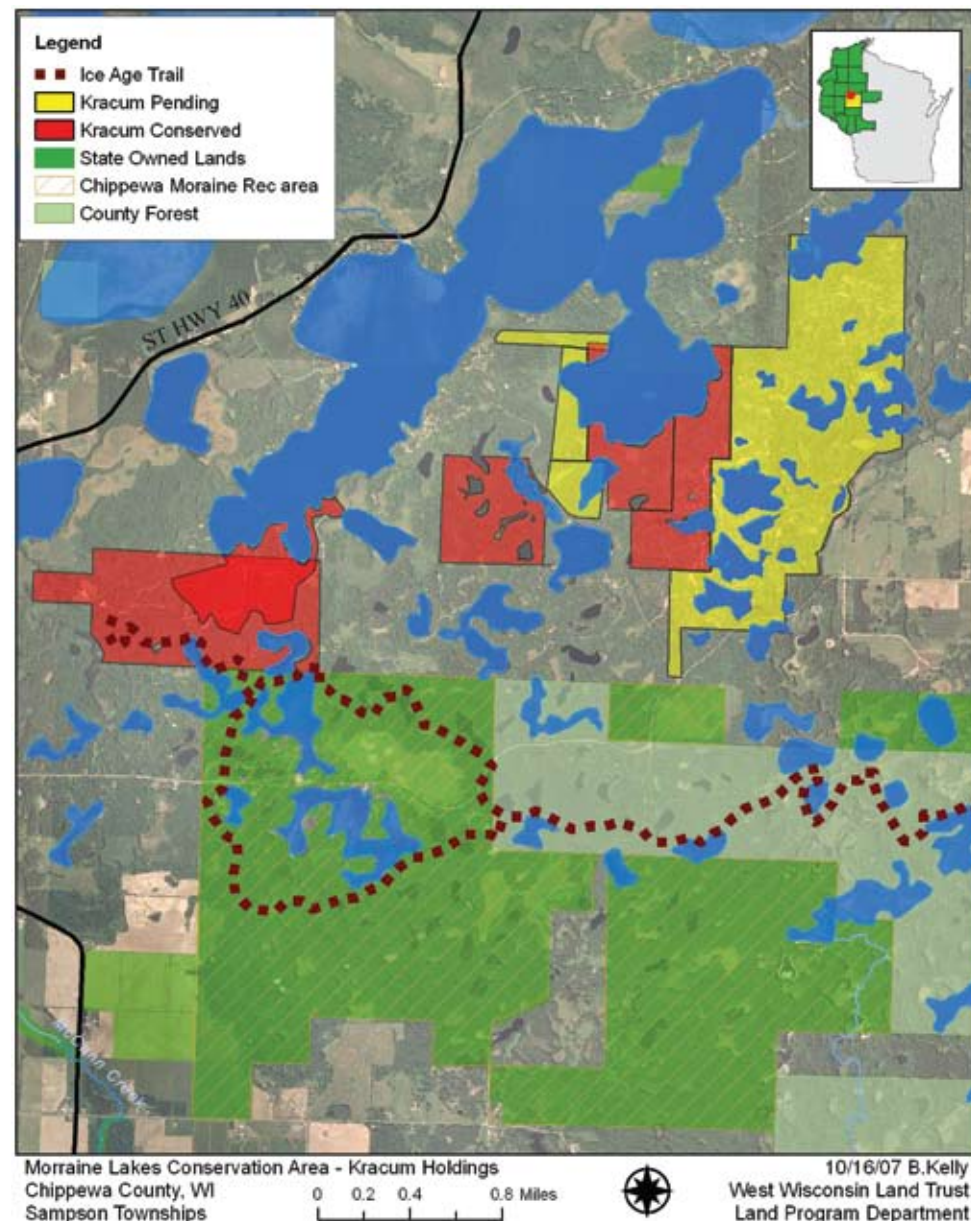
impact will hit them as they begin to have families themselves, and they see this wilderness will always be here, this quiet and peaceful place."

From the early days of their life together, when Rich had to use his retirement account to purchase his first 80-acre parcel on the lake, Rich and Laura knew it was worth the sacrifice. Herde Lake and the neighboring Chippewa Moraine lakes were something very special. So, as property became available near the lake, they purchased it, and working with West Wisconsin Land Trust, they permanently protected it.

In the initial visit with West Wisconsin Land Trust staff, Rich wanted to know "the range of how much he was going to lose." Once the conservation plans were made, however, it brought a satisfaction that was immeasurable.

What Rich knew he could count on was Laura. She would provide him with the margin necessary to justify the land purchases and its subsequent protection. Together, they knew this was the right thing for them to do.

"This is the only thing that will save beautiful places. Most people rely on the *continued on next page*



## A River with a View

By Nancy Toedt



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Those who have enjoyed the view of wooded bluffs along the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers from a boat or a canoe, or have spent the night at a primitive shoreline campsite, appreciate the significance of the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which granted immediate federal protection to the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway.

The protection of the Riverway has been an ongoing effort, as rapid population growth and changes in land use have impacted its ecological integrity. "The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is one of the original eight Wild and Scenic Rivers," explained Tom Bradley, superintendent of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. "Its very complex land ownership includes over a thousand scenic easements. Many of these easements are now over 30 years old and, in many cases, have been subdivided."

In July, West Wisconsin Land Trust was awarded a grant from the St. Croix Valley Community Foundation, which will enhance efforts to protect the scenic resources and water quality of this river corridor for current and future generations. Over the next three years, West Wisconsin Land Trust will work in cooperation with the National Park Service to update the information on lands within the Wisconsin side of the Riverway, develop a stewardship program for the scenic easements, and help conserve additional lands as opportunities arise. This grant allows West Wisconsin Land Trust to continue its effort to expand conservation programs, and collaborate further with agencies and organizations to protect the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and its watershed.

"We chose West Wisconsin Land Trust because of their impressive track

record of land preservation in north-west Wisconsin, a recent example being the 448-acre Simonson acquisition for the city of St. Croix Falls, which borders the Riverway," added Bradley. "We are excited about working with West Wisconsin Land Trust on this important project."

"Those who championed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act expressed their desire 'to give all citizens, and especially the children, an opportunity to appreciate a sense of history, a sense of environment, a sense of national place, and a sense of joy for free-flowing water,'" declared West Wisconsin Land Trust Executive Director Rick Gauger. "This unique partnership between the National Park Service, the St. Croix Valley Community Foundation, and a private nonprofit land trust will carry on their riverine legacy, and help shape the future of the St. Croix valley."

**Help preserve the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway with a year-end gift! Double the impact of your gift by giving to West Wisconsin Land Trust's permanent fund, designed for the future. Gifts up to \$50,000 will be matched dollar for dollar by the St. Croix Valley Community Foundation's Partners for the Future Initiative.**

# Wildlife Conservation

## National Land Trust Rally

The nation's largest annual gathering of conservationists met in Denver in early October to plan the future of private land conservation in America. Rally 2007 included speaker Mark Konishi, deputy director of the Colorado Division of Wildlife (Department of Natural Resources). In his speech, Konishi declared, "I don't see you as just land trust representatives, but individuals of, and for, change." He continued:

"Everyone in this room represents organizations that are changing the way our wildlife resources are managed and conserved, not only in this state, but across the country..."

Nothing of great significance was ever achieved alone. More and more, we are consulting, relying, collaborating and partnering with a wide variety of conservation constituents interested in achieving common goals.

These partnerships have resulted in securing greater funding opportunities to benefit all conservation efforts. Together, we have the opportunity to move conservation to the forefront of history."

## Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Grant

The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) has awarded a 10.8 million dollar grant to accelerate the con-

servation of wildlife habitat in five Midwestern states: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri and Wisconsin. The grant focuses on the protection of priority areas, as identified by the State Wildlife Action Plan in each of the respective states.

Wisconsin priority regions include the northern forests, Mississippi Blufflands, and the St. Croix Watershed.

"The state wildlife action plans are so valuable because they identify the wildlife habitats that state officials, scientists, conservationists, hunters, anglers and others agree are priorities to protect now, while much of our wildlife is still abundant and habitat conservation is still cost-effective," said Dr. Mark Shaffer, director of DDCF's Environment Program.

DDCF awarded the grant to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF), which will work in partnership with The Conservation Fund (TCF), Ducks Unlimited (DU) and other organizations across the region.

"This grant should inspire a wide range of organizations and individuals to work together and speed up the implementation of the wildlife action plans, protecting the beautiful lands and clean waters that are so important to our wildlife, as well as our quality of life, here in the Midwest," said Mark Ackelson, president of INHF. West Wisconsin Land Trust is one of the organizations that will be working with INHF, as a member of the Blufflands Alliance.



*"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, & beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."*

*-Aldo Leopold*

The Kracums on vacation in New Zealand.  
From left to right: James, Laurie, John, Rich.



*"We feel so lucky to be here. We have the opportunity to preserve this place, so we should do it."*

government to do this, but if people don't start doing this on their own, development is going to get totally out of hand," Laura asserted. "We feel so lucky to be here. We have the opportunity to preserve this place, so we should do it."

Growing up on the lake and enjoying all the outdoor recreation that environment provides, it is easy to understand why Rich and Laura's conservation values run deep. One might say that the Kracum family is "putting on a clinic" when it comes to conservation, because they have argu-

ably preserved more miles of shoreline than any other family in the state of Wisconsin.

Buzz Sorge, an authority on lake ecology for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), highly favors Long and Herde lakes because of the lack of development, the near-shore habitat and the water quality. The DNR Lake Protection program, managed by Bruce Neeb, has gone to bat for this unique resource and, as a result, West Wisconsin Land Trust has been awarded several large lake grants, which will ensure permanent protec-

tion of these lakes.

Years ago, when the West Wisconsin Land Trust staff was establishing priority areas, one of the sites selected was the glacial lakes area of the Chippewa moraine. Several parcels there had already been protected by the state and the county. WWLT's goal was to establish a contiguous corridor from the lakes to the large blocks of protected forest, for wildlife habitat. The Kracums have nearly completed that corridor, single-handedly: no small feat!

# Karner Blue Butterfly Unlocks The Door To Sand Prairie Protection

By Jane Anklam



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE ENGEL, USFWS

By now, if you are a fan of prairies, land protection, winged insects, or forest management in western Wisconsin, you are familiar with *Lycaeides melissa samuelis*, the Karner Blue Butterfly. You know that it is a federally listed endangered species. It requires wild blue lupine to complete its life cycle. You have learned that both the male and female are blue, and are about the size of a dime. You might also know that the Karner Blue Butterfly has two flights per year, and that Wisconsin hosts the largest and most stable population in the country, with only five other states providing habitat for the insect (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, New York).

But, what does the Karner Blue Butterfly mean to us in terms of permanent land protection? A proposed project, in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UW-EC), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Defenders of Wildlife, and the Prairie Partnership of River Country Resource Conservation and Development, will help us find out.

In 2002, after lupine and Karner Blue inventories were prepared and confirmed for the Eau Claire River basin, the USDA Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) focused attention on agricultural landscapes that could host the butterflies. Through the various land

restoration programs, and with the help of the UW-Eau Claire conservation biology department, conservation contracts were enhanced to develop habitat for the Karner Blue. "This required a slightly different seeding mix and management than the typical CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) contract," explained Andrew Bourget, county executive director of the Farm Service Agency in Altoona. "It also required a landowner who had the ability to think long-term towards the care of the land, and the ecological role that a sand prairie played on their farm."

In early 2006, Tim Meyer, NRCS soil scientist and West Wisconsin Land Trust volunteer, went back to look at the success of the habitat restoration on those fields. "In some cases, the lupine was there but not the butterflies. In others, butterflies had established or expanded into adjacent fields, forming new colonies," cited Meyer. "I became aware that not all fields were the same in their ability to support Karner habitat." Meyer ended up developing a regional model for Karner Blue habitat based on soil type.

With a clearer picture of how to plan for habitat success, the USDA in Eau Claire and Jackson counties approached West Wisconsin Land Trust, to continue the habitat restoration partnership, using the Karner Blue Butterfly as a measure of project success.

The USDA had just offered the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative to each state that could successfully develop vital habitat restoration for rare and declining species. The Eau Claire and Black River basins contain the proper soils and support known populations of this endangered butterfly.

The SAFE proposal will reimburse landowners to develop the habitat, while monitoring and measuring the success of the project. "In the process, the landowners will have the opportunity to consider, to a higher degree, their role of permanent protection of the entire ecosystem," offered Rick Gauger, executive director of West Wisconsin Land Trust. "By virtue of a land trust in the partner mix, the connection of management in relation to permanent habitat protection can be explored more directly."

As with other rare and declining species, if we can stabilize this habitat, we are doing the right thing on the right land. So, as with the Karner Blue Butterfly, why not the Wood Turtle, Timber Rattlesnake, Cerulean Warbler, or Piping Plover? As we establish habitat management and restoration success, we will continue to preserve the natural character of western Wisconsin.



# One Way to Repay 88,000 Birds

By Mike Dahlby

The waterfalls, mountain peaks, and sub-alpine meadows of the Sierra Mountains studied by John Muir became Yosemite National Park. A worn-out farm in the sand country along the Wisconsin River provided literal and literary inspiration for Leopold's ecological restoration project. And now, an 80-acre Chippewa county woodlot, which was saved from mining and systematically transformed into a wildlife haven, is available for preservation.

"I wish to secure this special place for study, wildlife, public education and recreation while it's under my control," Dr. Charles Kemper proclaimed.

What makes Kemper's woodlot so special? For starters, proximity within the Eau Claire-Chippewa Falls metropolitan area and to an adjacent 1,200-acre wetland complex. But its history is what makes it a gem.

"Over the last 52 years, I've analyzed over 88,400 birds amongst the woodlot's trees, shrubs and wildlife openings, to learn the when's and where's of neotropical bird migration, and how long they live—including several species that won't be around much longer if their habitat is not preserved," explained Kemper, a retired Chippewa Falls physician. "This is a long study and I hope it can continue after I'm gone. I wrote *Birds of Chippewa Land* to consolidate my records for sharing with others." (*Birds of Chippewa Land* is available for purchase at [www.outskirtspress.com](http://www.outskirtspress.com).)

Dr. Kemper is one of Wisconsin's foremost amateur ornithologists. A nationally recognized authority on bird mortality from collision with communication towers, his pioneering research was first published in *Audubon Magazine* in 1958. ([www.audubonmagazine.org/](http://www.audubonmagazine.org/))

Thirty percent of Wisconsin's 284 native bird species have been identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan. Among them is the Golden-winged Warbler, whose dramatic decline is linked to loss of shrub habitat. Kemper's bird banding data on the Golden-winged Warbler and other species demonstrates that the need for increased bird conservation efforts is great.

Chippewa County Land Conservation Department staff helped Kemper develop a plan to

keep the land in its natural state in perpetuity, and provide for public use. Making the plan a reality were four non-profit organizations: Chippewa County Land Conservancy, Inc. (CCLC), West Wisconsin Land Trust, Inc. (WWLT), Chippewa Wildlife Society, and the Community Foundation of Chippewa County. CCLC will buy the property using State stewardship funds, and will then offer it to Chippewa County, to be managed as a special unit of the county forest. The preservation of Kemper's Woods will benefit the general public for bird watching, nature appreciation, and outdoor education.

The group has raised \$230,000 in public grants and \$82,000 in private donations. An additional \$10,000 is all that is needed to accomplish the acquisition goal.

To learn more about Kemper's Woods, or how to contribute financial support, please contact Chippewa County Private Lands Conservation Specialist Mike Dahlby at (715) 726-7921 or [MDahlby@co.chippewa.wi.us](mailto:MDahlby@co.chippewa.wi.us).

right: Golden-winged Warbler, below: Dr. Kemper

