

04/11/2024

Preserve Committee Meeting

Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve Report

Will Vuyk & Ingrid Jordon-Thaden, Friends Board President

<https://www.friendslakeshorepreserve.com>

Letters to UW Admin

On April 3rd, the Friends Board of Directors and then-president Will Vuyk sent two letters to UW Administration in support of the Preserve Committee's 2023 letter advocating for increased budgetary and staff support of the Preserve. We have not yet heard any response. The Friends' letters, along with the Preserve Committee's original letter, were sent to Chancellor Mnookin, Provost Isbell, Vice Chancellor Cramer, Vice Chancellor Torstveit, Dean Robbins, Director of Sustainability Nergard, Preserve Committee Chair Beattie, and the entire Friends Membership.

Please see the letters further below in this document.

Friends 23rd Annual Meeting

23rd Annual Friends Meeting

Wednesday April 3, 7:00 pm

In person at the UW Arboretum Visitor Center

The Friends' 23rd Annual Meeting was a success! Retiring board president Will Vuyk quickly recapped the year before introducing the next year's top two priorities: catalyzing the Frautschi Center small donation fundraising campaign and working out an affiliate agreement with the University. President elect Ingrid Jordon-Thaden recognized retiring board members Signe Holtz, Mason Polencheck, Steve Sellwood and Will Vuyk. Nominations chair Diana Tapia Ramon held a unanimous election of renewing and incoming board members Yara AL-Rayyan, Matt Chotlos, Anne Pearce, Logan Dachel, Thomas Jilk, Steve Holtzman, and Jeff Koziol.

Preserve interim director Laura Wyatt and UW Madison Director of Sustainability Missy Nergard delivered an inspiring Preserve Report before associate professor Jessica Hua presented her talk "Dilution is NOT the Solution to Pollution: How Amphibians, Parasites and You Can Help Us Understand the Complex Effects of Pollutants on Wildlife." Professor Hua's talk was well received and many interested attendees signed up to get further information about the Friends of Amphibians citizen science network.

Field Trips

Since the last Preserve Committee meeting the Friends have continued to work with the Preserve and the Friends of Urban Nature to host public field trips in the Preserve. More information about past field trips can be found on the Friends website linked above. Upcoming field trips in April include:

Sunday, April 21

Lichens of the UW Lakeshore Nature Preserve

1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

We will stroll the paved road and the larger gravel paths on Picnic Point, looking for lichens growing on trees and rocks. Lichens are a very hardy (visible year-round) symbiosis mostly of a fungus and an alga; learn more on the walk! In preparation for this field trip, you may download to your cell phone the guide "Lichens of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve" from <https://lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu/field-guides-and-species-check-lists/> The first couple of pages of this are valuable but NOT necessary! Be sure to dress warmly and wear waterproof boots if you have them, just in case. If you have a hand magnifier of any sort to bring, you will find it very helpful (none provided)! And remember – no collecting! Meet at the Picnic Point entrance kiosk, 2000 University Bay Drive. Leader: Susan Will-Wolf (swwolf@wisc.edu).

Sunday, April 28

Beyond Backyard Birding: Lakeshore Nature Preserve

7:30-9:30 a.m.

This morning trip is especially for backyard birders looking to grow their skills! Come to have your bird questions answered and find help identifying all of those small, streaky brown birds. We'll also be keeping our eyes out for any exciting spring migrants. The walk will be on even trails at a leisurely pace so bring the whole family! We will have binoculars for loan. This walk is co-sponsored with Southern Wisconsin Birding Alliance. NOTE: This trip is limited to 20 people. Registration is required at Southern Wisconsin Birding Alliance website. Registration opens six weeks in advance. Meet at Picnic Point Entrance Kiosk, 2000 University Bay Drive. Leaders: Ashley Olah (ahannah@wisc.edu or 608-515-1304) and Jenn Schneiderman.

Sunday, April 28

Wildflowers of the UW Lakeshore Nature Preserve (FUN)

1:30-3:00 p.m.

On this family-friendly hike, explore the first Friends' restoration project,

begun in 2001. We will look for spring ephemerals and other tender new growth. Learn how to identify wood phlox, violet, bloodroot, Jacob's ladder, wild strawberry and other wildflowers. Meet at the Picnic Point entrance kiosk, 2000 University Bay Drive. Leaders: Glenda Denniston (glendadenniston8@gmail.com, 608 231-1530) and Eve Emshwiller.

Tuesday, April 30

Spring Birding in the UW Lakeshore Nature Preserve

7:30-9:30 a.m.

Join us to look for spring migrants, including early warblers, vireos, thrushes and orioles as well as resident birds in this Important Bird Area. Learn how the Lakeshore Nature Preserve serves as a critical stopover habitat for migrating birds, and how, in bad weather, Picnic Point can produce spectacular collections of fallout migrants. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them; Southern Wisconsin Birding Alliance will also have a few pairs of binoculars to loan. NOTE: This trip is limited to 25 participants and registration is required at the Southern Wisconsin Birding Alliance website. Registration opens six weeks in advance. Meet at the Picnic Point kiosk, 2000 University Bay Drive. Leaders: Roma Lenehan (rlenehan@charter.net, 608-238-5406) and Becky Abel.

Friends of Amphibians, 2024

The Friends of Amphibians Citizen Science Network had its first meeting in 2024 on March 7th. It was decided that we will continue with the same slate of surveys this year as last year (call surveys, die-off monitoring, water quality testing, and larval trapping). The Hua Lab will make a new facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61557181204633>) from where to coordinate efforts, and a website to host a data dashboard and training information (<https://jhua13.wixsite.com/friends-of-amphibian>).

We are looking forward to another successful season of amphibian monitoring! Will Vuyk (wvuyk@wisc.edu) will remain the Friends' point of contact for this project this summer.

Letters to UW Admin Below



Friends OF THE
LAKESHORE NATURE PRESERVE

P.O. Box 5534
Madison, WI 53705
www.FriendsLakeshorePreserve.com

04/03/2024

Dear Chancellor Jennifer L. Mnookin, Provost Charles Lee Isbell, Jr., and Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Robert G. Cramer:

Before getting to the subject of this letter, I want to acknowledge the difficulty of being a university administrator in these times of increased political polarization, decreased trust in higher education, and open hostility. Thank you all for your work in maintaining and improving upon UW-Madison's long and venerable legacy as a public academic institution in the face of these challenges. I understand that there are many other issues that occupy your time, and I appreciate your decision to consider what I have to say. I would not write to you if I did not believe what follows to be both within your capability and of high importance.

Each great city has a natural area that, like a vital organ, becomes inseparable from the function and character of the city itself: Mount Royal, Montreal (the city's namesake); Milwaukee and Chicago's Lake Michigan coastlines; Central Park, New York City. These are the ones that I know personally; you doubtless know many more. Residents and visitors alike have relied on these places for generations as founts of health, knowledge, and connection to the more-than-human world.

Madison is uniquely rich in parks. Even among a crowded field, however, the city's most emblematic natural area is obvious. The UW-Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve is Madison's Central Park. It also has the potential to be so much more. Despite often being mistaken for a city park, the Preserve is really the front door to an outstanding public land grant institution that prides itself on education, research, and outreach in the name of the Wisconsin Idea. On one hand, this is an incredible circumstance. UW-Madison could not own a property more valuable to its mission. On the other hand, it's perplexing that the campus' crown jewel must use gift funds to clean its pit toilets. For decades, the front door of the University has been maintained in large part by volunteers. Over the years, many of these volunteers have grown more and more skeptical that those in power share their values. Luckily, the path to alleviate this dissonance is straightforward and we are already moving in that direction. The Preserve Committee previously reached out to you with a measured request **to increase the Preserve's staff and yearly operating budget**. With a passion instilled by my experience as a recent graduate, Madison resident, ex-officio member of the Preserve Committee, and President of the Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve, I implore you to honor this request. Investing in Madison's beating green heart is a win for everyone.

Not only is the Lakeshore Nature Preserve the largest living classroom and laboratory on campus, it is rivalled only by the adjacent Memorial Union as the preeminent confluence of the University and the public. Thousands of students use the Preserve to commute. Thousands more use it for recreation and respite. Adding in the many classes and research projects on site, being in the Preserve is a near-universal experience for Badgers. Residents and visitors as well, given a wide range of choices in Madison, still flock to the Howard Temin Lakeshore Path and Picnic Point. Hundreds of thousands of people (of all ages, from all over the world) use and enjoy the Lakeshore Nature Preserve every year -- and that is just the present.

This land has been lived in and cherished since time immemorial by the Ho-Chunk people, whose ancestors' burial mounds and canoes still punctuate the site. The natural, cultural, and social gravity of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve is undeniable. The Preserve is a one-of-a-kind asset that unfortunately has a recent history of being overlooked. Three hardworking and talented staff coordinate the maintenance, restoration, teaching and research programs of the 300-acre Preserve -- on an insufficient budget. The Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve, a community nonprofit organization, has provided land stewardship, and financial and outreach support for the past 24 years, covering some of the Preserve's operational holes with a crowd-sourced band-aid. We know that caring for an urban natural area today requires an investment of considerable time, effort and money.

Because the Lakeshore Nature Preserve relies on fundraising to cover basic operational costs, it is limited in its capacity to facilitate use that befits its role as University property. The fact that the Preserve is still Madison's beating green heart despite years of frugal budgeting is a testament to the power of this place, but it also highlights a missed opportunity. Currently, the Preserve effectively functions as another Madison city park for the vast majority of people who use it and thus remains underutilized as a research, education, and outreach asset. A budget designed to leverage the Preserve's strengths rather than keep it on life support would - at minimum - cover operational costs. This would enable gift funds to catalyze the place's enormous potential as a model for sustainability, urban ecology research, cultural heritage preservation and public engagement. Such an investment in the already iconic property would not only be a boon to the University in terms of attracting top-notch faculty and students, but it would also be a huge win for public relations. Excitingly, recent events have sparked hope that this vision of the future could come to pass.

The Lakeshore Nature Preserve staff's move to the Office of Sustainability, the completion of the second Lakeshore Nature Preserve Master Plan, and the building of the Frautschi Center all point to a future where the Preserve is more recognized, more appreciated, and utilized to its potential. Please take this as a sincere compliment for the work already done, but also as a challenge to clear a higher bar. The time to take the next necessary step and increase the budget of the UW-Madison campus's most vital organ, and UW's most underutilized asset, is now. Investing in the Lakeshore Nature Preserve is a win all around.

The last point I wish to make is not an argument about budgets or strategy, but a personal and ethical one. When I was a child visiting my grandparents, we'd go for long walks in the Preserve. When I was a student eager for knowledge, the Preserve filled my mind with wonder. When my dad was dying at University Hospital, the Preserve was where I found the space to cry. When I entered post-school adulthood, the Preserve became the center of my community. As a recent graduate, Madison resident, ex-officio member of the Preserve Committee, and President of the Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve, I know that I am not alone in my experiences. For every one of my stories, there are thousands of others. Together, these stories paint a vibrant picture of what it means to live in Madison, Wisconsin. Every great city has its emblematic greenspace, and the Lakeshore Nature Preserve is ours.

We are now the custodians of this land. As administrators, please do it right. Increase the Preserve's staff and yearly operating budget to demonstrate your commitment to this place treasured by the Madison community and the University's student body. Treat the Preserve as an incredible gift to cherish and foster, not just a property to maintain, and we will all reap the rewards.

Yours truly,

William C. Vuyk, President



Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve



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LAKESHORE NATURE PRESERVE

P.O. Box 5534
Madison, WI 53705
www.FriendsLakeshorePreserve.com

04/03/2024

Dear Chancellor Jennifer L. Mnookin, Provost Charles Lee Isbell, Jr., Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Robert G. Cramer:

The UW-Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve is a vital part of campus and the city of Madison itself. We agree with the Preserve Committee that this iconic and cherished place should not have to rely on gift funds to cover basic operational costs. With the Preserve staff's recent transfer to the Office of Sustainability, the finalization of the second Lakeshore Nature Preserve Master Plan, and the imminent construction of the Frautschi Center, now is the time to give the Preserve the support it needs not just to exist, but to flourish.

Sincerely,

The Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve Board of Directors:

Yara AL-Rayyan

Matthew Chotlos

Signe Holtz

Ingrid Jordon-Thaden

Reba Luiken

MJ Morgan

Anne Pearce

Mason Polencheck

Steve Sellwood

Josh Sulman

Diana Tapia Ramon

William Vuyk

Thomas Zinnen