



Autumn/Winter 2023



We were honored to acknowledge and celebrate the legacy of our regional lands as a community during the annual Treasures of Oz (Ozaukee County) public eco-tour. The land acknowledgment held at Spirit Lake Nature Preserve was hosted by OWLT and the Lutheran Church of the Great Spirit in Milwaukee. Indigenous people from the Church led the sacred ceremony. Enjoy this personal account by one of our members, Nancy Camden.

The last of the asters were blooming and the waning crescent moon was visible in the blue sky above the small lake as the large group came together. Participants gathered in a circle around the fire because it was stated that **“A circle is never ending.”**

Among the group of guides for the land acknowledgment were Mexico and USA-born participants. They guided the group to turn to face the East to acknowledge and pay homage. In turn, we faced South, West, and North. At the end of each moment of homage, the group offered **“Aho”**, meaning ‘Yes, I agree’, ‘I understand’, or ‘I acknowledge.’

All participants were given tobacco leaves and walked along the circle in a counterclockwise direction to approach the fire from the East. We were informed that from the East, we signal that we come in peace. After individually sprinkling our tobacco leaves into the fire with positive thoughts or a wish, we continued to walk along the circle back to our original place among the group.

After this event, I have given up on my 65-year wish when I blow out candles or see a shooting star. After I got my first bike at around age ten, for 65 years I have wished for ‘peace on earth.’ With all the wars going on and the political turmoil in our own country, as we face escalating forest fires, floods, drought, the decline in insect and bird populations, and hurricanes, I made my tobacco offering in the fire with a new wish.

During the gathering, we were gently messaged to be attentive to nature and comprehend our oneness with everything. I interpret that as from rocks to clouds and everything in between. Pastor Char, from the the Lutheran Church of the Great Spirit in Milwaukee stated that,

“We need the earth. The earth doesn’t need us.”

I believe that our time here as a species is not a given. From those we suppressed and diminished, we need their wisdom to save our planet. Going forward, my wish is **“May Earth survive”—with or without us.**

- Nancy Camden, dedicated OWLT member

**“We need the earth.
The earth doesn’t need us.”**





Accolades, Awards,

According to Josh Schlicht, Stewardship Manager, “Kurtz Woods is a premier example of natural area protection in Ozaukee County. This preserve hosts an amazing ecological community which is what led the Kurtz family and The Nature Conservancy to protect the preserve back in 1980. Since 2005, OWLT has owned and managed Kurtz Woods for the benefit of the local community as well as for the species that call it home.”

The mission of OGFN is to connect people with nature by creating a national network of protected, publicly accessible forests. The organization’s goal is to ensure the preservation of at least one forest in every county in the United States that can sustain a forest, estimated to be 2,370 out of a total of 3,140 counties.

Nick Sanchez, Network Manager for OGFN remarks, “This mature maple-beech forest is a fantastic addition to the Network and we’re thankful to the OWLT and their community of supporters for the important work they do to protect and care for this forest.”

“OWLT is proud to have Kurtz Woods inducted into the Old Growth Forest Network. It feels great to recognize a place that has given so much community enjoyment and ecological benefits for so many years. Many thanks to the efforts of the families and partners who protected the land and to the members of OWLT whose volunteer hours and donations have stewarded the Preserve. We look forward to preserving and cherishing this old growth forest forever.” - Josh Schlicht

- Nick Sanchez (OGFN) & Leona Knobloch (OWLT)

OWLT’s Kurtz Woods State Natural Area was inducted into the Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN) this year. Nick Sanchez, Network Manager for OGFN Staff presented the sign, now featured at the preserve, to Josh Schlicht, OWLT Stewardship Manager.

The 45-acre Kurtz Woods State Natural Area contains approximately 42 acres of mature southern mesic forest, a remnant of the pre-European settlement forest community that once covered much of southeastern Wisconsin. The Preserve hosts over eighty species of trees, shrubs and spring ephemerals and has remained intact for at least 100 years. The trees are predominantly sugar maple and American beech with smaller numbers of basswood and black cherry. Many large individual trees are present and create a mature, fairly closed canopy environment. Unique woodland wildflowers found at this property include hepatica, bloodroot, wild leek and spring beauty.



& Partnerships

Tom Stolp received the 2023 Land Trust Professional of the Year Award

from Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts on November 9th at OWLT's Cocktails for Conservation celebration in West Bend.

Tom Stolp, OWLT Executive Director, has been instrumental in the process to conserve the Clay Bluffs Cedar Gorge in Port Washington. The project to create a 134-acre preserve that will be free and open to the public was over a decade in the making, but came to a screeching halt after previously awarded funding through the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program was withheld by the state legislature's Joint Committee on Finance.

Tom led the OWLT staff and board to rally widespread public support for the project, team up with partners and other organizations, raise copious amounts of funds, and call on elected officials to ensure the permanent protection of the property along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

"Tom has demonstrated unwavering leadership in a time when a strong voice for conservation was needed most," said Mike Carlson, Gathering Water's Executive Director. "The new Clay Bluffs Cedar Gorge Preserve will help expand outdoor access and offer people another spot to recreate along the Lake Michigan shoreline in addition to the popular Lion's Den Gorge Nature Preserve. Tom brought the energy and passion needed to get the right people excited about this project and committed to protecting this special place forever."

- Amanda Jutrzonka, Gathering Waters



Christine Bohn, Kettle Moraine Grazing owner, receives MMSD Green Luminary Award

because of her "entrepreneurial spirit and for using alternative land management practices that are environmentally friendly and based on science... Christine is a trained land steward who understands the land's ecological needs and has also learned how to manage a goat herd specifically for target grazing. Target grazing is the use of livestock to meet vegetation management goals. Target grazing monitors the timing, intensity, and duration of grazing to control Invasive species." (mmsd.com/about-us/news)

Christine, OWLT's Land Steward Coordinator & Vegetation Specialist, started with the organization in 2014. Her conservation work with goats developed from Christine's desire to utilize alternatives to chemicals for invasive plant management. In 2020, goats were introduced to OWLT stewardship work as part of a partnership project with Mequon-Thiensville Sunrise Rotary.





Photo of Land Restoration School and AmeriCorps Teams

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Protect and Preserve: Places For Our Children's Children & Beyond

"Knocking on Nature's Door"

I knock on nature's door
to find myself once more
With all the troubles I face everyday.
I clear my thoughts and here I lay
In a soft bed of leaves.
I find it hard for myself to believe
That the fresh, crisp air I inhale
always seems to solve my problems
without fail.
With a new gist of life within me
I walk away with glee
knowing that once more
I shall be knocking on nature's door.

- Jenny T., '94 Thomas Jefferson Middle School Studente



In 1992, a group of Ozaukee County residents decided to conserve the land now known as Sauk Creek Nature Preserve. The area was a favorite to many in the community at the time, in that it provided a haven for nature-based recreation. The residents wanted to preserve all of the land's fantastic character to leave a legacy for future generations, so they affectionately referred to it as **"A Place for our Children's Children."**

The journey 30 years ago to conserve Sauk Creek Nature Preserve firmly established our commitment to conserving places with "flora, fauna, and folks" in mind. After almost 25 years of effort, OWLT succeeded in protecting the 80-acre Dix property in Fredonia with key support from our partners at The Conservation Fund, MMSD's Greenseams® Program, and Wisconsin DNR's Knowles -Nelson Stewardship Program. The property is within the boundary of the Huiras Lake Woods and Bog State Natural Area, a 450 acre wetland and upland forested area that supports very high biodiversity because it contains relatively undisturbed examples of several wetland and upland forested areas, and comparatively free of exotic invasive plant species. The existing Huiras Lake State Natural Area contains walking trails and a public pier. The new 80-acre acquisition offers protected habitats for plant and animal communities in addition to safeguarding the existing quality habitat of the nature preserve. We look forward to our professional staff and volunteers protecting and enhancing the biodiversity of this important complex in the heart of the North Branch of the Milwaukee River.

Thanks to you, we have expanded to 36 preserves - and with more to come!

With 30 years to reflect upon, it is fantastic to look ahead at the big plans in store:

- Advancing 260 acres of conservation easements along the Milwaukee River in Washington and Ozaukee Counties.
- Mentoring 12 Emerging Conservation Professionals as they begin their careers in natural resources management by passionately stewarding the lands of our community.
- At Forest Beach Migratory Preserve, we are capping off a three-year effort that has injected \$414,000 of habitat investment into the former golf course turned preserve. By deconstructing outdated facilities and removing 51,000 square feet of impervious surface combined with the reintroduction of native vegetation and stormwater catchments we will reduce surface runoff into Lake Michigan and make the preserve more welcoming to wildlife and visitors.

All of these plans are only possible thanks to you. It is only through you that we can continue to deliver our mission to protect and steward land and water for the benefit of all.

With gratitude,

Tom Stolp, Executive Director

**Thank you for continuing to support this legacy
for the health of the nature and well-being of future generations!**

IMPACT REPORT

Autumn/Winter 2023



WITHIN THE LAST YEAR...

OWLT EVENT ENGAGEMENT

OWLT CELEBRATIONS
&
EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

of OWLT EVENTS

5

of GUESTS AT EVENTS

193

STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS
& GROUP WORKDAY
ACTIVITIES

of WOKDAYS

25+

of VOLUNTEER HOURS

1,672

PARTNER EVENT ENGAGEMENT

OWLT PARTNER
EVENTS
& ACTIVITIES

of PARTNER EVENTS

8

of GUESTS AT EVENTS

231

MISSION STATEMENT:

To protect and steward land and water for the benefit of all.

Visit owlt.org to GET INVOLVED!



**OZAUKEE
WASHINGTON**
Land Trust