



WHEN WARM ISN'T SO COOL

by Matt Reetz, executive director

What a winter that was. Or should I say, "What? A winter, that was?" From December through February, it was more than 10 degrees above average and the warmest winter on record in Wisconsin. There was a lot less snow to push around. Some of this was due to the strongest El Niño since 1950. Some of it, and perhaps not separate from El Niño, was a result of global climate change.

What does this mean for birds? Many effects of climate change have already been seen through range shifts, early spring arrivals, changes in nesting dates, and more. Scientific studies support these trends, and the consequences are problematic. According to National Audubon Society's "Survival by Degrees" research report, under the minimum (and optimistic) predicted warming scenario of 1.5°C, at least 61 of Wisconsin's migrant bird species are moderately or highly vulnerable to being lost in the state within 50 years. That's a best-case scenario too, and the clock is ticking.

So, what to do? Each of us can take personal steps that mitigate warming (find out how at the link on the right) and reduce threats to birds. But, your support of our work also delivers crucial lift in the face of a changing world. Our wildlife sanctuaries provide restored, diverse, and climate-resilient habitats where birds can—and will—find what they need to live and reproduce. Our advocacy efforts will continue to seek and foster climate- and bird-friendly policies and solutions. Our citizen science programs help us better understand our birds and how to mitigate the many threats they face (e.g., window strikes) to keep populations healthy. And our education program strives to inform and inspire people of all ages about the importance of birds and the many threats they face, including climate change.

It sure was an unusual winter, but likely a sample of what's to come. Knowing this made it harder for me to enjoy those warm days. But knowing that so many folks like you care so deeply and are working to make a difference for birds, and for all of us, provides an even better, more hopeful kind of warmth.

To learn more about climate change and what you can do, visit [epa.gov/climate-change](https://www.epa.gov/climate-change).

A LITTLE METAL BAND

by Kaitlin Svabek, director of communications



“There are still many unsolved problems about bird life,” wrote Dr. Paul Bartsch in 1904. Seeking to learn about their behaviors and migration patterns, he marked 23 Black-crowned Night Herons with serially-numbered bands that contained instructions to return them, if found, to the Smithsonian Institution. In the end, only a single bird was recovered by a hunter just 55 miles northeast of Washington, DC. And so went the first systematic, scientific bird banding effort in the US—but it laid important groundwork for a process that profoundly impacted the study of birds.

In 1920, Frederick C. Lincoln founded a federal bird banding office (now the US Geological Survey Bird Banding Laboratory), establishing some of the principles, procedures, and policies that still stand today. Since bird banding is a key part of ornithological research, it is subject to rigorous standards and must be conducted under a federally authorized permit. Banders must undergo serious training and commit to renew their USGS permits every few years.

Because of these regulations, banding itself is quite safe for birds. A lightweight metal band—which comes in 25 different sizes, for all species from hummingbirds to swans—is fitted around their leg using special pliers. Measurements are often taken, recorded, and submitted (along with the band number) to the federal database.

Data gathered from banding tell us so much about individual birds and populations—beyond what Dr. Bartsch could have even imagined. Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance is proud to be involved in local banding efforts to better understand the lives and patterns of many species, like declining American Kestrels and Purple Martins. We hope to offer opportunities this summer for folks to join us in the field, learn more about banding, and experience it firsthand!

If you observe a banded bird, you can play a crucial role in bird research by reporting information to www.reportband.gov.

Explore further, safer, and steadier!

We are proud to offer a comfortable, outdoor, electric-powered wheelchair at most of our events and field trips this spring, summer, and fall—for free!

This wheelchair is wonderful for anyone with temporary or permanent mobility limitations. Whether you or a loved one has an injury or disability, is recovering from surgery, or has difficulty walking long distances, we would love for you to put this wheelchair to good use.

To request the wheelchair at an upcoming outing, complete the event registration form and select yes for borrowing the wheelchair. We will bring it to the event and show you the simple steps for using it.

In the picture to the right, Brenna demonstrates how to use the wheelchair (SoWBA photo).



Questions?

Contact Brenna at 608-255-2473 or email bmarsicek@swibirds.org.

THREE EASY STEPS: CHANGES THAT SUPPORT BIRDS

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by Brenna Marsicek, director of outreach



This spring, I had the privilege of co-hosting a workshop with SOS Save Our Songbirds, Holy Wisdom Monastery, and the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. The workshop was about people helping birds in three big and wonderful ways: gardening with native plants, buying bird-friendly coffee, and preventing window collisions.

Native plants are living, natural bird feeders. They support many, many times more insects and arachnids than ornamental plants. Approximately 96% of terrestrial bird species in North America only feed their chicks insects and other types of arthropods, and it takes between 5,000 and 9,000 insects to raise just one brood of chickadees. ONE! For recommendations on which native plants to select for your garden, check out sossaveoursongbirds.org/add-plants-for-birds.

Big wins for birds!

In fall 2023, a Wisconsin appellate court upheld Madison's bird-safe glass ordinance, which has been in place since 2020. The ordinance requires new buildings over 10,000 square feet to use patterned glass or bird-friendly design. Look for dots on glass in large, new buildings in Madison!

In February 2024, Middleton passed a matching ordinance. Thank you to all of our members and partners who responded to our calls for action and supported these efforts!

Coffee production overlaps in geography with winter habitat for many of our neotropical migrants like warblers and tanagers, and deforestation for traditional coffee plantations is huge. The Bird Friendly® certification is the gold standard for coffee production that supports birds, biodiversity, and growers. Not many coffee retailers or shops carry this type of coffee yet, so there are two things you can do: visit swibirds.org/bird-friendly-coffee to purchase coffee online, and print and cut out the postcard at swibirds.org/coffee-postcards and bring it to a local coffee shop or vendor.



Finally, up to a billion birds die every year in the US due to hitting windows, and almost half of those deaths happen at homes. Find ideas for how you can make your windows bird-safe at swibirds.org/prevent-collisions. Many of these projects can be done yourselves, but the webpage also features a new and growing list of companies in southern Wisconsin that you can hire to apply window treatments at your house.

Whether you're planting a serviceberry shrub (my favorite), drinking a cup of Birds & Beans coffee (tasty and certified Bird Friendly®), or adding dots to your window to allow birds safer travel, you're doing a lot of good for our feathered friends. Thank you!

Bird conservation, close to home.

Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance is your southern Wisconsin Audubon chapter. Though we have a similar mission to protect birds, we are a distinct organization from National Audubon Society. By directly supporting SoWBA or becoming a local member, you make a big difference for the birds and habitats you love right here in Wisconsin and beyond. Thank you!

THE CONFUSED GROUNDHOG

by Penny Shackelford, Fair Meadows volunteer sanctuary manager

Many of us know the groundhog legend: if he sees his shadow on February 2, there will be six more weeks of winter. If not, spring will come early.



However, groundhogs don't usually come out of their burrows until March or April, and it's not polite to wake them up a month early. This year, even a naturally awakening groundhog

would have had a difficult time telling when winter was over. On February 8, it was 55 degrees Fahrenheit. A week later, snow fell, and a few days after that, the nighttime temperature was 9 degrees. On February 27, the high was 74 degrees; on February 28, it was 34 degrees. There was more of the same in March.

We worry about the effects of these wild fluctuations on the natural world. Groundhogs are true hibernators. Unlike their close relatives in the squirrel family—chipmunks and tree squirrels—groundhogs eat primarily grass and leafy plants that cannot be stored. Thus, they must rely on hibernation to make it through the winter, and they can lose up to 30 percent of their body mass before spring. Chipmunks and tree squirrels have access to stashes of seeds and nuts and can remain active or go into a state of torpor during severe weather. For groundhogs, early warm weather may bring them out of hibernation before enough food is available. A similar problem faces other hibernating wildlife, like bats. This winter, we also lacked snow cover, which leads to colder temperatures underground and may cause groundhogs to use their energy reserves faster.

We have a new, imposing groundhog den at Fair Meadows easily viewed from our house. It has a lovely fresh subsoil mound around it. On warmer days this spring, we have spotted the tenant basking on their front porch, then running along the rock border next to the nearby prairie.

We were relieved when the final warm-up arrived, so that our groundhog neighbors had an ample feast of fresh spring vegetables.

Looking for a new way to explore Fair Meadows Sanctuary? Take a virtual tour with our newest storymap! Learn all about the beautiful landscapes, unique habitats, and native species that call this place home at swibirds.org/storymaps

AMPHIBIANS SPRING BACK TO LIFE

by Emma Raasch, Goose Pond ecological restoration technician

Each spring, Goose Pond Sanctuary welcomes thousands of migratory birds back from their long journey south. However, another arrival to look forward to is from creatures who never really left: the amphibians. While salamanders quietly leave their upland burrows to return to breeding ponds, frogs and toads emerge from their winter hiding spots with a fervor.

Since 1984, Mark Martin and Susan Foote-Martin have participated in the DNR Frog and Toad Survey on a route that includes Goose Pond Sanctuary, Schoeneberg Marsh Waterfowl Production Area, and Otsego Marsh. At Goose Pond, boreal chorus frogs are usually the first to break the long winter silence.

During the first survey period from April 8 to 30, we can expect to hear a roar of boreal chorus frogs and spring peepers, with the occasional croak of a leopard frog or quack of a wood frog. In the second period (May 20–June 5), gray and cope's gray treefrogs steal the show, while trills of American toads and deep strums of green frogs play in the background. The third period (July 1–15) features many of the singers of the second period, but green frogs take center stage at deeper wetlands.



Unlike the boisterous frogs and toads, eastern tiger salamanders make a silent return. After overwintering below the frost line in Goose Pond's restored prairies, these large, black and yellow amphibians wriggle their way to the pond in late winter to early spring. Upon their return, they will court, and females will lay up to a hundred eggs, which will hatch about four weeks later. The larvae will remain in the pond for approximately two and a half to five months until reaching adulthood, usually in mid-August.

Prairie potholes like Goose Pond provide excellent breeding habitat for salamanders, frogs, and toads. Similar to their fluctuating water levels, amphibian populations vary from year to year. Drought years are particularly hard on them, especially when they occur two or more years in a row (which may be the case this year). While there is sheet water on the ponds and a few of our wetland scrapes, the Jackson Wildlife Unit is likely the only area that will hold water long enough to produce amphibians this year.

Luckily, these resilient creatures live several years, and Mark and Sue have found that they are typically able to bounce back. When the water returns, so do they.

by Roger Packard, Faville Grove volunteer sanctuary manager

In 1874, Thomas C. Chamberlin, a young professor of geology at Beloit College—who would soon become Wisconsin's chief geologist, then president of the University of Wisconsin, and later head of geology at the University of Chicago—was studying southeast Wisconsin as part of the comprehensive Geologic Survey of Wisconsin. Given the nature of his study area, Chamberlin focused heavily on glacial geology, and he would make major contributions to the field. But he also investigated several outcrops of much older quartzite bedrock lying east of Waterloo.

He noted gouges in the rocks that indicated the direction of advance of the latest ice sheet of 15 to 20 degrees west of south. In that direction, quartzite "boulders appear in great force," gradually fanning and thinning away from the known outcrops as far as 50 miles into Illinois. Yet he also observed scattered quartzite boulders up to three miles to the east with no known source. He found a promising "boulder train" along the south edge of the Town of Waterloo and followed it to its source at Faville Grove that came to be known as the Lake Mills Ledge.

"The relations of these quartzites to the surrounding formations is exceedingly interesting," he wrote. "The lower layers of the Trenton limestone, reposing upon the St. Peters sandstone, occur at the same level as the quartzite, with no indication of disturbance." (emphasis in original). "In the intermediate space are boulders of conglomerate, the pebbles of which are of quartzite, precisely similar to that of the outliers, while the matrix is of white sand similar to that of the St. Peters sandstone."

These observations suggested a series of events that could only have occurred on an Earth of great antiquity. Quartzite was known to form from layers of sand laid down in shallow seas. These layers were subsequently compressed into sandstone and later fused and folded into a hard, brittle, glassy material through the intense heat and pressure of an orogenic, or mountain-building, event. The sea advanced again, partially submerging the rocky peaks and depositing more layers of sand (becoming the St. Peters sandstone) up to the current level of the ledge. At this point, "the quartzite rose as a rocky island in the depositing seas," Chamberlin concluded, "and yielded its material to the beating of the waves, by which the conglomerate was formed." Yet another retreat and advance of the sea, this time deeper, left fine calcium deposits that settled into limestone on top of the sandstone and buried the quartzite entirely. Finally, a massive sheet of ice ground over the area, removing layers of soft lime rock, snapping off and transporting boulders of quartzite, while exposing the solid core of the former mountain.



The Lake Mills Ledge, now protected and publicly accessible at Faville Grove Sanctuary, is currently estimated to be 1.6 billion years old, far older than anyone in Chamberlin's day thought, but Chamberlin nonetheless understood it to be immensely old. In May of 1899, *Science* published an address by Lord Kelvin titled: "The Age of the Earth as an Abode Fitted for Life." Based, in part, on his assumption that the sun's heat resulted solely from its contraction as it formed and on its rate of cooling, Kelvin asserted flatly that heat from the sun could not support life on Earth for more than 40 million years and he estimated the age of the planet at closer to 20 million years. Chamberlin promptly challenged the respected mathematical physicist, suggesting, among other arguments, the possibility of an internal source of heat on the sun. As one observer noted, "Not a few British scientists expressed surprise that anyone should have the temerity even to reply to Lord Kelvin, let alone attempt to unhorse him in his own field. Yet the latter is precisely what was done." A career of careful geologic observations, including those at Faville Grove, convinced Chamberlin that the great Lord Kelvin was flat-out wrong.

Thanks for helping us piece together the landscape! Faville Grove Sanctuary just grew in a small but important way with the recent acquisition of a two-acre residential lot. Carved out of the corner of the southernmost parcel in the sanctuary before it was acquired, SoWBA held a right-of-first-refusal on the lot and was able to act quickly when it came up for sale, thanks to earlier donations to our land acquisition fund.

by Carolyn Byers, director of education



Our education programming is flexible and fun—something we’re proud of. Every few months, our educators meet with our partner teachers to plan the next batch of lessons. We ask them what they’ll be teaching—in every subject, not just science!—and look for opportunities to connect what they’re learning in their classrooms to what they’re learning outside with us. Our lessons also keep pace with the seasons, so kids can observe what they’re learning about in real time. We have been updating many of our lessons to share the work of scientists of color, providing another way for kids to connect with nature. Often, we’re able to pull activities from our huge collection of favorites, but sometimes, we get to create a new one!

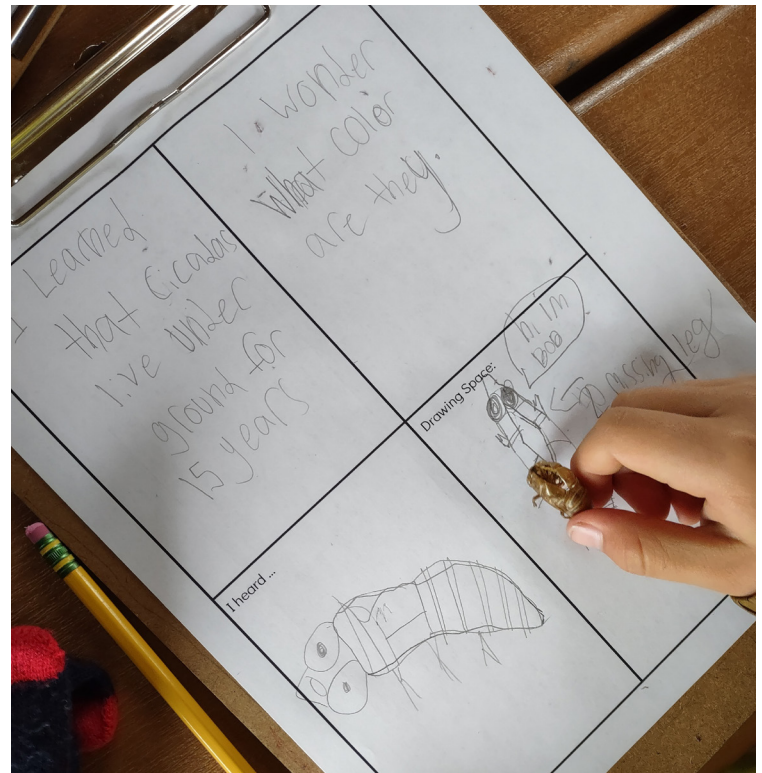
Every fall, we have a lesson about cicadas. Kids journal about exoskeletons, we teach them a bit about cicada life history, and then have a metamorphosis obstacle course that emphasizes the cicada life cycle.

This year, we decided to expand that lesson to include a Black scientist’s pivotal research and a new game. We wanted the game to be a really active game, because kids learn best after they’ve moved their bodies! Teachers were most excited about focusing the game on the relationship between cicada killer wasps and cicadas. We came up with a brief outline for our game: a modified version of tag.

We set up a space bounded by small traffic cones, spread flat silicone mats on the ground in patches to represent trees, and placed hula hoops down to represent

cicada killer wasp burrows. Most of the kids are cicadas and some of the kids are wasps, distinguished by a bandana on their arm.

Cicadas run around avoiding the wasps, and are safe when they're hiding on trees. If a wasp tags a cicada, they bring the cicada to a hula hoop and tie a bandana on the cicada's arm. This symbolizes how wasps immobilize a cicada and place them into a burrow with an egg, which will hatch, eat the cicada, and grow up into a new wasp. Voila!—that kid changes from a cicada to a wasp in the game.



After the first round or two, we noticed that the cicadas kept hanging out on the trees. One of the teachers suggested adding a bird—something that might eat a cicada and encourage them to move around more. So with all of the adults running around, flapping, and making bird noises at irregular intervals, the game fell into place.

At the end of each game, we talk with kids about it. What about the game is like real life, what is just for fun. What about the game worked, and what kinds of suggestions they have to make it better. This truly does help us create better games, and it helps kids stay invested in their learning. They're a part of how new games get created!

Our education program is possible thanks to support from the Caerus Foundation, Theda and Tamblin Clark Smith Family Foundation, and Jenni & Kyle Foundation.

Family field trips this summer

Join our education team for free, fun field trips specially designed for families with kids! Learn together through science-themed activities, educational games, and nature exploration. Suggested ages: 5–12. Register and find more information at swibirds.org/events.

Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance gets a huge boost through our paid ecological restoration internship programs each summer. Six interns will be based at Faville Grove Sanctuary and three will be based at Goose Pond Sanctuary. We are looking forward to them joining us in this important work! To learn more about our interns, visit swibirds.org/2024-interns.

FAVILLE GROVE



Tyler Atwood
(any pronouns)
Colorado State
Favorite bird:
Great Blue Heron



Soraya Castle
(she/her)
UW-Madison
Favorite bird:
White-winged Dove



Parker Gimbel
(he/him)
UW-Madison
Favorite bird:
Elf Owl



Maxwell Heilig
(he/him)
UW-Madison
Favorite bird:
Hummingbird



Emma Holton
(she/her)
UW-Madison
Favorite bird:
Great Blue Heron



Sara Rider
(she/her)
UW-Madison
Favorite bird:
Barn Swallow

GOOSE POND



Andi Hokanson
(they/them)
UW-Madison
Favorite bird:
Sanderling



Andy Smith
(he/him)
UW-Madison
Favorite bird:
Chestnut-sided Warbler



Hailey Wedewer
(she/her)
UW-Madison
Favorite bird:
Indigo Bunting

Welcoming our first Diversity in Conservation intern

We are thrilled to welcome an intern from the Natural Resource Foundation of Wisconsin's Diversity in Conservation program this summer.

Helena Bello (she/her), a rising junior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will join our staff, both in the office and in the field, to explore the many facets of conservation work four days each week, then spend one day each week learning with her intern cohort. Her favorite bird is the Prothonotary Warbler.



by Becky Abel, director of philanthropy

There are three very important badges on our newsletter and the Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance website that you may have noticed and wondered about. What do all those symbols mean?

These seals mean you can trust SoWBA to use your donations responsibly and strategically. They mean that our programs are efficient and mission-focused. They mean that our finances are in order and that our board and staff are held to high professional standards. And they mean that we protect bird habitat and manage it to the highest ecological standards.

We're proud to have received the highest possible rankings from these three organizations!

Charity Navigator Four Star rating



The first is our Charity Navigator rating. Charity Navigator is an independent nonprofit that assesses hundreds of thousands of US-based charitable organizations to provide supporters with the information they need to make confident philanthropic choices.

Charities are evaluated for practices related to Finance & Accountability, Impact & Results, Leadership & Adaptability, and Culture & Community.

Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance has a four-star rating, which is the highest rating possible. To earn a four-star rating, a charity must "exceed or meet best practices and industry standards across almost all areas" and is "likely to be a highly-effective charity."

Candid Platinum Transparency 2024



Candid (formerly called GuideStar) is the world's largest database of nonprofit organizations. They award seals of transparency to provide potential donors with important information to make informed decisions about their charitable giving. Metrics evaluated include finances, goals, programming, strategies, capabilities, achievements, measures of progress, staff and board, and impact. Candid awards four levels of seals: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. Less than 1% of US-based nonprofits are awarded the Platinum Seal, which is the highest attainable level, and Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance is among them. Our Platinum Seal indicates that SoWBA exceeds nonprofit industry standards and is an organization you can trust.

Land Trust Accreditation Commission Seal

While all of our badges are important, the third one may best represent the power of Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance's work. Did you know that SoWBA is one of just



a handful of bird conservation organizations in the country that is a nationally accredited land trust? We have owned and managed land since 1968—our three sanctuaries provide permanently protected habitat for birds and rare species. The review process for national land trust accreditation is rigorous, and we are proud that this green seal affirms that SoWBA meets national standards for excellence, public trust, and permanence of our conservation efforts.

Thank you to all of the volunteers, supporters, staff, board and partners who make Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance strong and badge-worthy!

For questions, contact Becky Abel, director of philanthropy, at 608-255-2473 x5 or babel@swibirds.org.

Welcome to our new membership & development associate!

Over the past year, Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance has expanded our land holdings, programming, staffing and corresponding workload. To help us support the demands of our increasing conservation impact, we're excited to announce our newest staff member, Liz Pelton. Liz brings a wealth of experience working with nonprofit membership programs and fundraising (including at Groundswell Conservancy and the International Crane Foundation) that will help SoWBA increase our membership and program support.



Growing up in the Madison area, Liz spent lots of time outdoors exploring Six Mile Creek and going on family camping trips at Wisconsin State Parks. She earned a B.A. in English from the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities. She started her career as a medical editor in pharmaceutical research and moved to the nonprofit world in 2015. She cares deeply about local conservation and making nature more accessible for everyone to enjoy. Liz, her husband, and daughter love getting outside together and feeding their backyard birds (and squirrels).

You made a big difference for birds! We are grateful to our supporters at all levels, but due to space constraints, are unable to list them in this issue. A list of all 2024 donors can be found on our website: swibirds.org/2024-donors

UPCOMING EVENTS

To register and find detailed information about upcoming field trips, events, and adult education offerings visit swibirds.org/events

Want to get involved? Find volunteer opportunities at swibirds.org/volunteer

PHOTO CREDITS

P1: Grasshopper Sparrow by Grayson Smith/USFWS Midwest

P2: Amber Eschenbauch of Central Wisconsin Kestrel Research holds a band by Kaitlin Svabek/SoWBA

P3: Brenna demonstrates using the new wheelchair by SoWBA

P4: Magnolia Warbler by Arlene Koziol

P5: Black-and-white Warbler via Pixabay

P6: A young groundhog rests on a patch of moss by Gary Shackelford

P7: Spring Peeper by Gary Shackelford

P9: David Musolf & 2023 summer interns on the Lake Mills Ledge by Roger Packard

P10: Kids play the new game with the education team by Carolyn Byers/SoWBA

P11: Cicada killer wasp with prey by Bill Buchanan/USFWS

P12 & P13: Intern portraits, courtesy of the interns pictured

P14 & P15: Charity Navigator, Candid, and Accredited Land Trust badges

P15: Portrait courtesy of Liz Pelton

STAFF

Becky Abel, director of philanthropy
Carolyn Byers, director of education
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Liz Pelton, membership and development associate
Matt Reetz, executive director
Kaitlin Svabek, director of communications

FAIR MEADOWS TEAM

Penny & Gary Shackelford, volunteer sanctuary managers
Chris Kaplan, land steward

FAVILLE GROVE TEAM

David Musolf & Roger Packard, volunteer sanctuary managers
Tucker Sanborn, land steward

GOOSE POND TEAM

Mark Martin & Susan Foote-Martin, sanctuary managers
Emma Raasch, ecological restoration technician
Graham Steinhauer, land steward

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We are a proud member of the following organizations:

