



Fall 2016

Sharing Experiences

By: Tom Sharatt

When people buy land, they do so for a variety of reasons, but regardless of the reason, most of us have come to love our property and have invested not only money, but lots of sweat and time to protect our land from erosion, invasive species, subdivision, mining or similar fates.

We purchased our farmland in Vernon County in 1971 for many of the above reasons, and moved there in 1996 after completing other careers. We raise organic crops on 65 acres with a partner who is our neighbor, have planted over 30,000 trees on land that is highly erodible, have built erosion control structures, and have 160 acres of woodland.

Knowing that our children will not keep the property, we've thought about ways to protect our land for future generations, for all people who cherish and respect land as

we do. We chose the Mississippi Valley Conservancy to help us achieve this goal.

We've had the full support of our children in this process, and have advised them not to be in a big hurry to sell the farm when we are gone. We know there are an increasing number of people who, like us, place value on land like ours for its natural beauty – native prairie and wildlife – and will pay a premium to acquire it. We believe if our children are patient, they are likely to get as much for our land with the easement as they would without it.

The easement is legally binding on all future owners, and the Conservancy has the financial ability to protect and enforce the terms of the easement by going to court if necessary. They will monitor the status of the property annually even after we sell it. We've shared

our decision with our neighbors, several of whom are considering the same action, and have had a very positive response from local people who have learned about our choice. The bottom line for us is that we can die knowing that our land will be protected and preserved in the future.

“ We'd like to thank all of the Mississippi Valley Conservancy supporters for helping us to make this dream of ours come true.” - Tom and Sharon Sharratt



Did You Know?

- A child's stress level falls within minutes of seeing green spaces.
- Exposure to natural settings may be widely effective in reducing ADHD symptoms.
- Being outside improves distance vision and lowers chance of nearsightedness caused by electronic screens.

For more about improving children's well-being by enjoying the great outdoors, visit www.BeOutThere.org.

**Hey there,
It's Me Again, Echo Eddie.**

I wanted to shout out some exciting news! I have a new friend I want to introduce to you. Meet my friend Eve, the evening bat.



I was hanging around some researchers at the DNR recently when they were excitedly talking about a new discovery. They were studying summer habitats of bat species in Wisconsin that are vulnerable to white-nose syndrome at Avon Bottoms State Natural Area in Rock County, when they caught Eve in their net.

They were surprised by her orange color and her burnt orange smell. How could this be? What a surprise. Evening bats had previously been found only as far north as Illinois. Curious now, they put a tracker on her and guess what they found next? A tree filled with more evening bats. Over 100 of them!

The thing about evening bats is they don't hibernate in caves but fly south to Florida in the winter, and then the females return north in the spring and roost in tree cavities. Because they don't winter in caves scientists think they likely aren't susceptible to white nose syndrome, which has killed millions of my bat buddies across the U.S.

While I have your attention, I'd like to give you a little update on my cave, Kickapoo Indian Caverns. The fine folks at Mississippi Valley

Conservancy are working hard to find enough cash to buy my cave and the awesome trees, plants and animals that thrive on the land above it, but they really need your help. If you've already donated, thank you!

If you haven't, could you donate today? It's easy, just go to www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org and click on the DONATE button, or send a check to MVC at 1309 Norplex Drive, Suite 9, La Crosse WI 54601.

Thank you for caring.

Your friend,

Echo Eddie



**IRA CHARITABLE
ROLLOVER GIFTS
Are you age 70½
or older?**

Did you know you can use Your Traditional IRA to Make Your Charitable Gift to Mississippi Valley Conservancy?

The IRA Charitable Rollover provides you with an excellent opportunity to make a gift during your lifetime from an asset that would be subject to multiple levels of taxation if it remained in your taxable estate.

Transfers must be made directly from a traditional IRA account by your IRA administrator to Mississippi Valley Conservancy. Gifts must be outright and can total up to \$100,000.

If you do not need the money the government is requiring you to take, consider using it for a charitable gift to Mississippi Valley Conservancy to help further the future of land conservation using the IRA Charitable Rollover.

Feel free to contact our office to discuss an IRA charitable rollover gift. 608-784-3606 ext. 4 and thank you for your support

Turtle Sniffing Dog

Abbie Church, Mississippi Valley Conservancy's conservation director was OK with having hunting dogs go after an endangered species on conservancy property.

That's because it was a team of Boykin spaniels trained to sniff out the rare ornate box turtle and deliver them to a handler without harming them. The Mississippi Valley Conservancy site was included in searches for the turtle in Wisconsin by the spaniels and their handler who travel around the country from their base in Tennessee. Wisconsin's DNR sought their help to confirm the presence of



one of Wisconsin's rarest species in habitat where it is likely to be found. The **ornate box turtle** is about five-inches long with an elaborately decorated shell -- dark brown or black "with conspicuous yellow lines that radiate from the center of each costal scute (one of the bony plates that makes up the turtle's shell) ...," according to the Wisconsin DNR web page about the species. The turtles are found in only a few areas in Wisconsin, primarily in areas

of southwest and south central counties where broad, deep sand deposits have settled out within the original Wisconsin River floodplain. Abbie said the identity of the Mississippi Valley Conservancy property that has a previous record for the presence of the turtle must be kept secret because of the risk of illegal hunting by collectors who sell the turtles as pets.

The turtle populations are suffering on multiple fronts; in addition to predators and poachers, females only lay about 4 eggs a year and the young have an uphill battle to survive. As they continue to lose more and more habitat each year, it becomes imperative for efforts such as the Conservancy's to protect and restore land, ensuring the turtle's habitat remains intact and usable for nesting. Knowing which areas the turtles are living and nesting in is important in planning management activities, like prescribed burns, invasive species control, and other activities that ensure the success of the turtle populations.

Rori Paloski, DNR conservation biologist, said: "This state-endangered species is Wisconsin's only terrestrial turtle, rarely venturing into the water. They spend quite a bit of their active season buried in the soil and they spend all winter completely buried below the frost line. This species' ability to dig underground, combined with its small size, can make it very challenging to locate even one of them!"

Hence the use of the turtle-sniffing dogs!

Happy Kids!

With fall in the air and color on the trees, it's time to take the kids out and enjoy the great outdoors before the snow flies. The Conservancy has numerous places for kids to stomp and run in the woods and prairie. Just remember to wear orange during hunting season!

Great places to take the kids:

Miller Bluff - Easy access, great views, and a short trip from town. Park at end of Rim of City Road, La Crosse. Paved and gravel trail to overlook.

Trempealeau Lakes - Flat wide trail through mixed conifer stands and spring-fed lakes. Subject to Flooding. Intersection of Lake Road and Pickerel Path, Trempealeau.

Greens Coulee - Moderate, hilly slope with great views of the valley. Mostly wooded with wide, mowed trail. Look for kiosk at the end of Clifford Drive, Onalaska



**Link To MVC
Nature Preserve**

**Taking in the view from
Miller Bluff.**



Leave A Legacy For Land Conservation - Include Mississippi Valley Conservancy In Your Estate

Remembering your most cherished causes in your estate plans is a way for you to ensure that the support you gave during your lifetime can continue, and that future generations will benefit from your generosity.

One of the easiest ways to ensure your love of land conservation continues is by naming Mississippi Valley Conservancy as a beneficiary in your will or living trust.

While it is certainly not necessary to do so, if you have already named the Conservancy in your estate plans, I would be grateful if you would let me know. You may do so by emailing me at: carol@mississippivalleyconservancy.org or calling 608-784-3606 ext. 4.

Thank you for considering a planned gift to Mississippi Valley Conservancy.


Carol Abrahamzon
Executive Director





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Mississippi Valley conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust in La Crosse, Wisconsin. MVC permanently conserved 17,736 acres of blufflands, praries, wetlands, and streams in and around the Mississippi, Kickapoo, and Wisconsin River since our founding in 1997. Over 4,000 acres are open to the public for hiking, bird watching, hunting, fishing, photography, and snowshoeing.



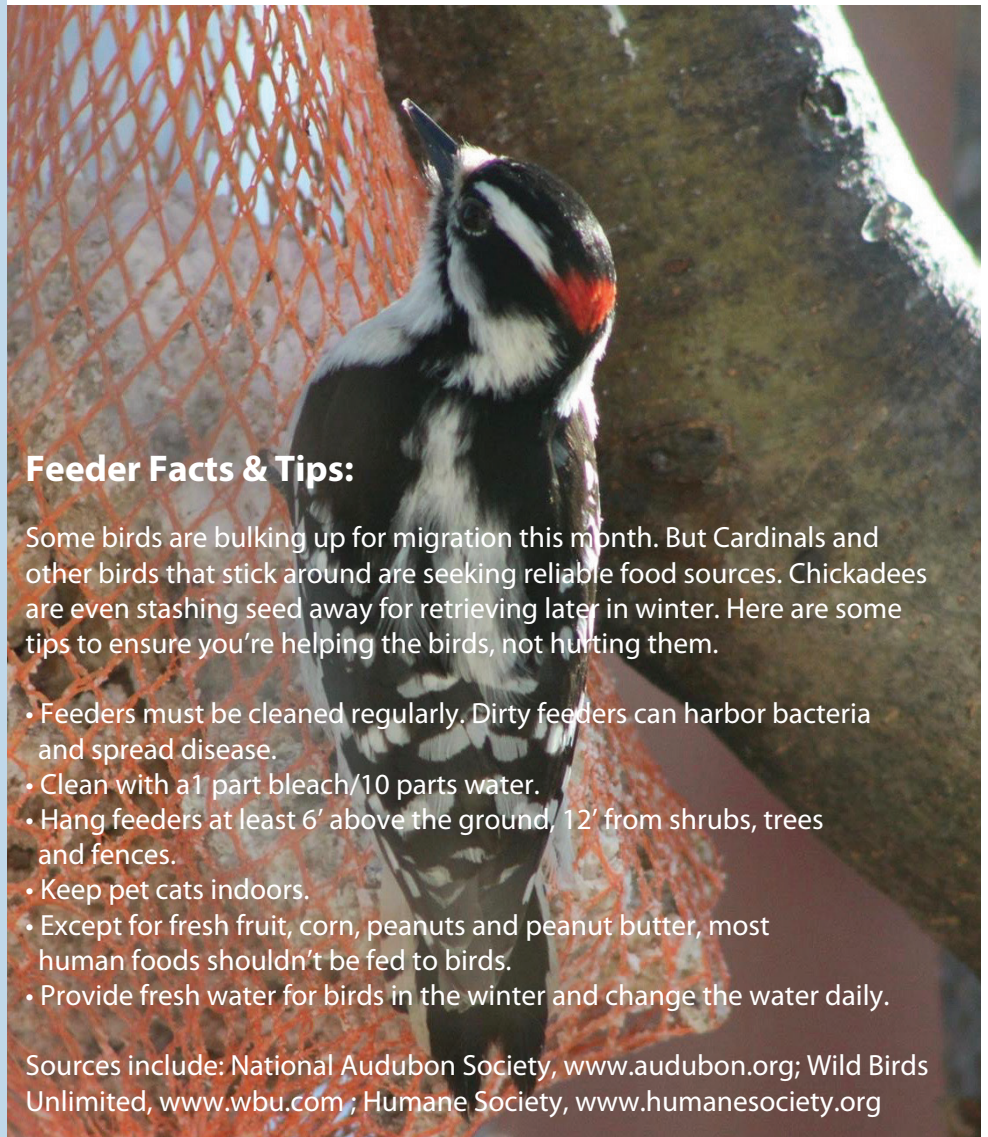
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Feeder Facts & Tips:

Some birds are bulking up for migration this month. But Cardinals and other birds that stick around are seeking reliable food sources. Chickadees are even stashing seed away for retrieving later in winter. Here are some tips to ensure you're helping the birds, not hurting them.

- Feeders must be cleaned regularly. Dirty feeders can harbor bacteria and spread disease.
- Clean with a 1 part bleach/10 parts water.
- Hang feeders at least 6' above the ground, 12' from shrubs, trees and fences.
- Keep pet cats indoors.
- Except for fresh fruit, corn, peanuts and peanut butter, most human foods shouldn't be fed to birds.
- Provide fresh water for birds in the winter and change the water daily.

Sources include: National Audubon Society, www.audubon.org; Wild Birds Unlimited, www.wbu.com; Humane Society, www.humanesociety.org

- Three Amigos
- Organic Valley
- Associated Bank
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