

**North Central Conservancy Trust**  
**Vol. 15 No. 1** **Spring 2015**

# THE TIES THAT BIND US



*Plover River*

*Photo by Roger Zimmermann*

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## NCCT-UWSP PARTNERSHIP BUILDS AWARENESS, CAPACITY FOR PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION

*Aaron Thompson, President*

As many of you know, the conservation community in Central Wisconsin is blessed with the nationally recognized undergraduate program in natural resources at UW-Stevens Point. UWSP's connection to North Central Conservancy Trust is a big part our organization's history, with many of those who have worked hard to support our conservation mission (as volunteers and easement donors) also having strong ties to campus. Following in this tradition, my connection to NCCT began 5 years ago with a short phone call with Jo Seiser to discuss opportunities for getting students more involved in the important work being done at NCCT. From that initial discussion I've seen this partnership between NCCT and UWSP flourish, including engaging students in service learning projects to help NCCT do the research it needs to identify lands worthy of protection, using a College of Natural Resource grant to hire our first intern, supporting the creation of a student organization called the Land Conservation Society that has begun helping with management efforts on properties protected by NCCT easements. The students bring new perspectives and their involvement is helping NCCT achieve more for conservation in Central Wisconsin.

I recently stopped to review the first project that I helped guide where my students worked with NCCT to map the critical natural resources of Central Wisconsin. This initial effort examined the locations of key resources, conservation priorities, and development threats within our eight county service area. While we didn't find a singular "solution" we did learn about the landscape NCCT is working to protect and this project began a dialogue that has continued to shape NCCT. Since this initial project I've seen this same concept of "strategic conservation planning" begin to move into a central role in the land trust community across Wisconsin. The basic idea is that land trusts can be more efficient in our conservation efforts if we first develop a common set of goals to guide our efforts, and then target our resources in areas where we can do the most good. Providing support to help organizations work with stakeholders to develop conservation plans is what UWSP students are being trained to do. And NCCT is providing a model for other land trusts around the state to follow, as the types of service learning efforts we've initiated are being copied. This spring, I was able to help students in the Natural Resource Planning program develop a strategic conservation plan for the Ozaukee-

*Continued on page 11*

## THE TIES THAT BIND US

*Betsy Kerlin, Executive Director*

On a recent trip to State College, Pennsylvania to visit my husband's family, I had the opportunity to go birding one chilly, foggy morning with my father-in-law Nick Kerlin. We headed out hours before my husband, Steve, normally arises from his slumber, in hopes of finding, in Nick's words, "something unusual." It was early September, and the potential for spotting migrating birds was great in the varied habits found in the forests and fields we explored just a few short miles from Penn State University. Although I was able to add Northern Waterthrush to my lifetime bird list (my list being a recent endeavor), it was likely considered in the eyes of more serious birders a slow bird day. But more important than the potential to spot an elusive or rare species was the opportunity to slow down and enjoy nature with someone I enjoy being with. I learned that Nick's favorite bird is a bluebird. He spotted his first bluebird on a trip to a family friend's farm when he was just eight or nine years old. The first bird species he banded was also the first bird species James E. Audubon banded, an Eastern Phoebe. I learned that Cedar Waxwings tips will turn orange after eating the berries of a honeysuckle bush, and was schooled with a short lecture on how to become a licensed bird bander.

Even as an adult, slowing down to enjoy nature with a friend or family member is one of my favorite pastimes. It is often in these moments that I realize that there is more to life than climbing the proverbial ladder. It's good to be reminded in these moments. My memories remind me, too. Some of my earliest memories are of hiking wooded trails in southern Ohio with my dad as my guide. What if I didn't have these memories? Would I be working in conservation? What about you? What led you to become a member of North Central Conservancy Trust?



*Cedar Waxwing  
Photo by Roger Zimmermann*

## VOLUNTEER CORNER: THE LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

The Land Conservation Society (LCS) is a newly formed University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point organization whose mission is to promote conserving land through land trusts, and assisting landowners with management activities on their preserved properties. LCS works mainly alongside North Central Conservancy Trust (NCCT) through the leadership of founding president April Ann Opatik. Thanks to the help of LCS's vice president, Chelsey Ehlers, and former LCS member, Becky Wadleigh, LCS's first work day consisted of helping clear out buckthorn and other invasive species on Ozaukee Washington Land Trust's Kratzsch Preserve. This spring, LCS provided volunteers to assist with the management of three NCCT preserved properties, including black locust removal on the Nancy Stevenson property, dam maintenance and brush removal on the Starpoint property, and buckthorn removal on the Bob and Sally Freckmann property. In addition to assisting Wisconsin land trusts, volunteers of LCS were introduced to land trust professionals, and gained experience managing invasive species.

LCS's president and NCCT intern, April Ann Opatik, wants to achieve national recognition for the Land Conservation Society. Her goal is to establish a template so that other land trusts can create similar clubs with neighboring universities. April added that, "It's important to have diversity within the land trust community...rarely do you see someone our age. It's important to have this diversity to invoke all positive aspects within a community." With Dr. Aaron Thompson, Assistant Professor in the Center for Land Use Education, as LCS's advisor, membership has been promoted throughout UWSP's College of Natural Resources.



For additional information on how to enlist the assistance of LCS on your property, or for advice on how to create a similar club at your organization, contact Betsy at 715-344-1910 or edncct@gmail.com.

## NCCT CLOSSES YEAR WITH 53-ACRE CONSERVATION EASEMENT

On Christmas Eve, North Central Conservancy Trust and David and Trudy Pederson signed a conservation easement on a 53-acre property located in the Town of Hull, Portage County. A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a landowner and a land trust like NCCT that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. Conservation easements are especially important for protecting the environmental qualities of central Wisconsin's landscape.



The Pederson easement will forever protect relatively undisturbed open fields and forest, along with a spring and an intermittent stream. Located just east of the Wisconsin River, the property holds special value as a migration corridor,

as well as providing habitat for a number of native species of plants and animals. David and Trudy Pederson stated "We acted to protect the rural character of a piece of the neighborhood that is relatively unspoiled by urban development."

David and Trudy Pederson first contacted NCCT in 2008 to indicate an interest in pursuing a conservation easement for their property. Their primary motivation was to preserve the historical features



present. The property was awarded as payment by the US government to war veterans in 1856. The preserved log home located on the property

*Continued on page 6*

*Continued from page 5*

served as the local grade school in the early 1900s when the original neighborhood schoolhouse burned down. “We saw increased pressure for residential development in our neighborhood after the re-routing of Highway 10 over the Wisconsin River north of our property. We acted to permanently preserve this rural farmstead for future generations and the wildlife we share it with,” the Pedersons said.

Because of the permanent nature of conservation easements, it sometimes takes a number of years to tailor the terms to meet the needs of both the landowner and the land trust. The signing of the Pederson easement was significant not only because it concluded a six-year project, but also because it was the final conservation easement completed by NCCT in 2014. NCCT completed four significant conservation easements protecting over 144 acres in 2014. Since NCCT’s creation in 1996, over 3,400 acres of beautiful central Wisconsin landscapes have been permanently preserved. Supporters like David and Trudy Pederson help NCCT ensure that central Wisconsin will remain the place many treasure, retaining its special rural character and beauty for future generations.

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## 12.7 ACRES DONATED IN THE TOWN OF LINWOOD

In November of 2014, a private landowner donated 12.7 acres in the Town of Linwood, Portage County to North Central Conservancy Trust. The property is entirely wooded, located between Orchard Lane and Highway 66, near the Wisconsin River Biron Flowage. NCCT is currently seeking a buyer for the land. Funds raised from the sale of the gifted property will be used to further NCCT’s mission to protect worthy scenic working lands and environmental resources for the benefit of the people of central Wisconsin.



For more information visit <http://www.ncctwi.org/green-land-for-sale/>

## PROPOSED MORATORIUM ON WISCONSIN’S KNOWLES-NELSON STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

North Central Conservancy Trust is disappointed to learn that Governor Walker is proposing to stop one of the most important public-private programs in Wisconsin—a program that directly benefits our economy and our lives by keeping our lands and waters healthy.

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program protects Wisconsin’s lands and waters, clean air, human health, working forests and the jobs they provide, tourism revenue, wildlife habitat, and the trails, parks, lakes, rivers and forests where we walk, fish, hunt, ski, and enjoy the outdoors. NCCT benefited from the Stewardship Program when funds were used to permanently preserve the Rice Lake Bog property in partnership with the Ice Age Trail Alliance in 2014.

Please contact your state legislators and the governor’s office today to express your concern and share why the Stewardship Program is important. The time to protect our lands and waters is now while they are intact and healthy and the opportunity exists to do so. Once the lakes and rivers have been polluted, large expanses of forest divided and developed, wetlands drained, the last prairies plowed up and replaced with houses, roads, and parking lots, it will be too late. Wisconsin residents clearly understand this. In a bipartisan poll conducted by The Nature Conservancy, nearly 90% of Wisconsin voters agree that even in tight fiscal times, the Stewardship Program should be a priority.

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## NCCT RECEIVES NORCROSS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION GRANT

Norcross Wildlife Foundation, Inc. out of New York City recently awarded North Central Conservancy Trust a grant in the amount of \$2,000 to help cover specific costs related to a fire- and waterproof filing cabinet. With the donation of our office in 2013, the consolidation of NCCT’s records in one location, and the hiring of NCCT’s first full-time executive director, NCCT is implementing the first steps of National Land Trust Alliance Accreditation. One of those first steps to Accreditation is keeping “originals of all irreplaceable documents essential to the defense of each transaction in one location...secure from fire, floods and other damage.” NCCT was able to purchase a two-drawer fire- and waterproof cabinet with our Norcross Wildlife Foundation grant last year, but quickly learned following consolidation that one cabinet will not store all of our original documents. A second cabinet will remedy this dilemma.

## LANDOWNER LONG DEDICATED TO NCCT DONATES 40 ACRES

In March of 2011, Vilas Krenz donated a conservation easement on 40 acres of land in the Town of Merrill, Lincoln County. In the easement, Vilas entrusted North Central Conservancy Trust with the task to protect the ecological and aesthetic features of the property. And so began Vilas' support of NCCT's mission to protect the rural character of central Wisconsin.

After numerous years of support through his conservation easement donation and membership donations, Vilas took another step this past February to further the work of NCCT in central Wisconsin. Vilas donated the 40-acre parcel of land in the Town of Merrill, Lincoln County. Vilas protected the parcel with a conservation easement in 2011, and gifted the property with a life estate to NCCT in 2015 with the understanding that the property would be sold in the distant future. The proceeds from the sale will go towards furthering the work of NCCT in central Wisconsin.



Those wishing to protect their land from undesirable development or use after they no longer can oversee it have the option to donate their land. This strategy is best-suited for landowners who are looking for alternative approaches for divesting ownership, or to reduce a tax burden on the owner or the estate. By donating land to NCCT, a tax credit for the value can be realized. NCCT will respect your wishes for the land, and will sell the property to a buyer who understands and accepts your wishes. Landowners receive the tax advantage, plus the satisfaction of knowing the proceeds from the sale are used to promote conservation across central Wisconsin.

## NCCT RECEIVES RIVER PLANNING GRANT FROM THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Using the results of the Plover River Strategic Conservation Plan developed by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's Center for Land Use Education (UWSP-CLUE), NCCT was awarded a \$9,911 River Planning grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to conduct a river-improvement education project focused on protecting private lands within the Plover River watershed (Watershed). The Plover River Watershed Education Project (Project) will work with towns in Marathon County and Portage County to educate private landowners within the watershed on voluntary conservation options available to permanently protect their properties. Those options include conservation easements or land donations.

This Project is being developed following the conclusion of the Plover River Strategic Conservation Plan (Plan) completed by UWSP-CLUE. The Plan was initiated to address the NCCT's conservation initiatives within the Plover River watershed. The Plan was intended to provide recommendations for where NCCT's conservation efforts should be focused.



Four analyses concerning water quality impact areas, forest continuity, recreation opportunities, and viewsheds were conducted. The results from the Plan's combined analyses identify priority areas of greatest importance for improvement or protection of the Plover River watershed. Areas identified for improvement would benefit from a permanent conservation easement or land donation requiring best management practices. For example, a conservation easement or land donation would require installation of riparian buffers to reduce sedimentation in the Plover River. Areas identified for protection would benefit from a conservation easement or land donation by ensuring permanent protection of the most important ecological values.

*Continued on page 11*

## NEW ON NCCT'S WEBSITE

### Roger Zimmermann Interview



Portraying the beauty of nature, Roger Zimmermann's photos take us on a journey about what it means to protect central Wisconsin lands. Visit NCCT's website to listen to an interview given by board member, Roger Zimmermann, and discover the reasons he volunteers for North Central Conservancy Trust. The

interview can be found on NCCT's home page or by typing the following link in your browser: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ixueg3flhKY> He even takes self-portraits like the one above!

### ZIMMERMANN GREETING AND NOTE CARDS NOW AVAILABLE

Donors who contributed \$100.00 or more as part of our 2014 end-of-year giving campaign received a package of eight notecards featuring photographs of NCCT's Marathon County easements. Featured photographs were taken by award-winning nature photographer Roger Zimmermann.

Now, everyone has an opportunity to purchase Roger's seasonal greeting and notecards. Seasonal sets of greeting and notecards are now available for sale on NCCT's website. Visit <http://www.ncctwi.org/what-we-do/greeting-cards/> for more information. These cards are a great way to show your friends and family the beauty of central Wisconsin. All proceeds from the sale of the cards benefit NCCT.

NCCT is thankful to Roger Zimmermann for sharing his talent with us.

*Until the end of August, donors who contribute \$100.00 or more will receive a package of eight notecards featuring spring photographs of NCCT's Marathon County easements.*

**Go green and help North Central Conservancy Trust save a little green in the process. Please consider receiving your newsletters and invitations via email. Call Betsy to indicate your preference and supply your email address.**

*Continued from page 9*

This Project will take the Plan's results to the next step by conducting a geographic information system (GIS) mapping and database assessment to identify all property owners within the priority areas. A public relations and educational campaign will follow to inform private landowners about their voluntary conservation options.

The goal of this Project is to develop and disseminate materials and educational programs that inform and encourage private landowners to utilize voluntary conservation options as a means to protect priority lands in a Watershed that provides wildlife habitat, ecological services, and recreational opportunities.



*Yellow Lady's slipper as it appears on a Zimmermann notecard.  
Support NCCT and get your set today!*

*Continued from page 2*

Washington Land Trust (OWLTL). The students are providing the land trust with analysis support to guide their decision-making. In exchange, OWLTL is educating students about how conservation works in the real world—leaning on the same approach NCCT has built with these students.

You can help support NCCT's partnership with UWSP students and our work to protect the landscape that makes Central Wisconsin special by becoming a member, renewing your financial commitment to our organization, or by making the commitment to protect your land with a conservation easement. As a non-profit organization, our members are critical to our success, and your contribution of land, cash, or other financial support can help us build a stronger partnership for private land conservation here in Central Wisconsin!

## KUSE EASEMENT SIGNED

On their father's 119<sup>th</sup> birthday, sisters Hildegard and Loretta Kuse signed NCCT's latest conservation easement, protecting the Kuse Nature Preserve. The Kuse Nature Preserve is a 35-acre property in the Town of Medford in the southeastern part of Taylor County.



It is situated on the western-most edge of the city, featuring forests, agriculture fields, and a working historic farm. Much of the property is planted in hay, providing scenic open space to residents and the Medford schools neighboring the property. The trails located on the property can be accessed by elementary and high school students studying at the neighboring Medford schools.

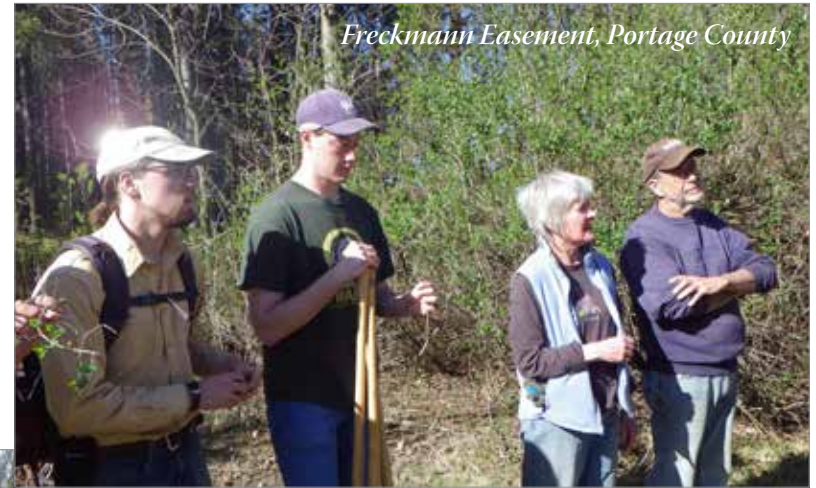
Hildegard and Loretta Kuse first contacted NCCT in 2007 to indicate an interest in pursuing a conservation easement for their property. Their primary motivation was to preserve the historical features present and to protect the active nature center. On Friday, May 1, the conservation easement was signed, permanently protecting 35 acres of green space in the city of Medford.

Hildegard and Loretta's connection to the land runs deep; the 35-acre property has been in the Kuse family since 1881. When discussing the importance of their easement, they pointed to the influence of their father, Walter Kuse, an environmentalist and artist. Walter Kuse's own experience in logging camps contributed to his desire to be a wise steward of his land, the same land protected by the conservation easement. When asked for a quote describing the importance of their easement, Loretta Kuse instead shared a stanza from a poem her father wrote in the 1930s:

To plant the land with trees once more  
With lakes on hand with a beautiful shore,  
The birds and animals again can roam  
And call this spot their quiet home.

For learn more about the Kuse Nature Preserve visit <http://kuse.medford.k12.wi.us/main/>.

## NCCT CELEBRATES EARTH DAY!



## COMING EVENTS

Join North Central Conservancy Trust for a Spring Event on Saturday, May 30 at Lost Creek in Portage County. Lost Creek is a Wetland Mitigation Site currently owned and managed by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (see website for directions to site). From 10:00 until 11:30, Gerry Janz will lead an educational program on the birds present and the habitats they occupy at this unique site. Join fellow NCCT members, learn something new, and enjoy a beautiful day outside!



North Central Conservancy Trust's Summer Event will be held on Saturday, August 8. NCCT's annual Summer Event is a day when we highlight one of our preserved properties with a hike and picnic. Additional details will be provided soon....

North Central Conservancy Trust's Annual Meeting will be held Tuesday, October 6. This year, the Annual Meeting will be held at the newly renovated Sky Club Supper Club and Banquet Hall in Plover. The evening will start with a social hour, followed by dinner and presentations. The Annual Meeting is an opportunity to celebrate the successes of the past year. A silent auction will be available with items from local vendors and artists. All funds raised will further NCCT's mission to protect worthy scenic, working lands, and environmental resources for the benefit of the people of central Wisconsin.

## NCCT MEMBERSHIP

**Yes! I want to join**  **or renew my membership**

Student \$10 \_\_\_ Key Donor \$100 \_\_\_ Trustee \$1000 \_\_\_

Individual \$25 \_\_\_ Sustainer \$250 \_\_\_ Fellow \$5000 \_\_\_

Preserver \$50 \_\_\_ Protector \$500 \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

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**For credit-card payment, please go to [www.ncctwi.org/donate](http://www.ncctwi.org/donate)**

*Donations are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.*

*Make check payable to NCCT, and mail to:*

NCCT, PO Box 124, Stevens Point WI 54481-0124



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PO BOX 124 STEVENS POINT WI 54481-0124  
[www.ncctwi.org](http://www.ncctwi.org) [edncct@gmail.com](mailto:edncct@gmail.com) 715 -344-1910

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NORTH CENTRAL CONSERVANCY TRUST  
PO Box 124  
Stevens Point WI 54481-0124  
[www.ncctwi.org](http://www.ncctwi.org)

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In this issue: NCCT-UWSP Partnership  
New Easements  
Upcoming Events  
...and more



*Working to protect, worthy scenic, working lands and environmental resources for the benefit of the people of central Wisconsin.*