

President's Annual Report from Jim Reinartz

Our seven-member Board of Directors is small but active and committed to the mission of the Friends. We continue to seek new volunteer directors who want to contribute their time and talents to the work of the Friends. We will be electing an eighth director at this year's Annual meeting.

The Friends educational programs have been very well-attended in the 2023 calendar year. 120 people joined our traditional winter hike to Long Lake in the heart of the Bog. It was an absolutely gorgeous day, as I remember it anyway, with a big friendly group having a good time in the wilderness. It may have been the only Sunday of the entire winter when we could have taken the hike all the way to Long Lake. The ice would not have been safe for a large group just the week before and there was a lot of thawing the week following the hike. I couldn't find a safe way onto Donut Lake on my reconnaissance walks, but we had a nice walk down Long Lake before we turned around and returned home to a bonfire.

After the huge response to the winter hike, we have offered or still plan to present 18 programs through the end of 2023, if I haven't lost count. Some of the programs this year were new topics that we have not offered before, including an off-site field trip to Horicon Marsh and a demonstration of methods and materials Native Americans used for making bows and arrows. We also brought back a nighttime stargazing program that we have not offered in a long time and John O'Donnell organized a "birding by canoe" adventure on Mud Lake.

During 2023 FOCB staff and volunteers have worked to revise and update the Friends' website. That project is nearing completion and our website will soon have a new look and improved functionality.

Our stewardship volunteers helped to control the invasive Oriental bittersweet in the Field Station Beechwoods State Natural Area and worked on invasive shrub control at the north end of the Bog on the island southwest of Watt's Lake. They also completed the annual "adopt-a-highway" litter pickup along Cedar Sauk Road that FOCB has done for years.

The Bog Guardian program continued preventing four invasive plants from establishing in the 28 mi² area surrounding the Bog, including teasels and wild parsnip which are being so destructive to habitats surrounding our area. We are working to eliminate a handful of populations of teasels and wild parsnip that were established before the start of the program and are making excellent progress with that task. Another invasive plant, wild chervil, is spreading rapidly along roadways south of the Bog Guardian area. We have added that to the list of species that we will monitor in order to prevent establishment in the Bog area; we found and eliminated one small patch in 2023.

The Friends continued monitoring programs to contribute to the scientific understanding of the Bog's wildlife communities. Bioacoustic monitors and wildlife cameras were placed in remote areas of the wetland. Sound recordings from 2022 made in the area west of Long Lake are being analyzed and the monitors were redeployed in the large marshlands north of Mud Lake for the 2023 breeding season. The Friends arranged for Wisconsin DNR forest health staff to visit the Bog to attempt to diagnose what is causing the apparent decline or unhealthiness of the white cedar trees in the wetland.

The Friends continued financial support of the Field Station's programs although due to retirement of university staff the Field Station did not offer its Natural History Workshop program in 2023. The Friends have worked closely with the interim Field Station Director to continue our programs and support the Station.

The Friends' artist-in-residence, Jeffrey K. Kunkel, produced 26 plein air oil paintings in the Impressionist tradition that were shown at the Cedarburg Cultural Center in the spring of 2023. Some of the paintings sold during that exhibition period and the FOCB has others that are still for sale. Jeff's art has the potential to bring greater awareness of the Bog and Field Station natural areas to a broader public. Linking art and nature can reach some people that strict science education does not. We plan to collaborate with the UWM Field Station to continue an Artist-in-Residence program in the future.