

October 28, 2011

Bruce Balas, President & OWA Board  
Chuck Dickerson, Conservation Committee Chr.  
Jay Grosmark, OWA Website

### REPORT ON OWA MEADOW RECOVERY – PHASE III

Our “work bee” on September 5 and 6 brought out a super group of volunteers who accomplished all the objectives planned. We had great weather for working and spirits were high. This final phase of the meadow recovery work completes the three year project as designed by Saving Birds Thru Habitat and approved by the OWA Board in 2009.

A sincere thanks to the following volunteers:

Bob Krist  
Lin Emmert  
Janet Dickerson  
Chuck Dickerson  
Bob DeVries  
Bruce Balas  
Gary Roll (new OWA member)  
Lynn Sutton  
Jeff Drinan  
Bill Sulau (new neighbor bordering our property on the west)  
Karen Bussey  
Marlin Bussey

Jim Charter of Saving Birds Thru Habitat was hired to brush hog the entire gravel pit area, widen the small “appendix” clearing, and mow the main clearing. He once again did a great job.

Ray Hogarth, Kal Excavating, did a masterful job in bulldozing the gravel pit. We are also indebted to Kal Excavating for donating the use of their pick-up for hauling brush and for use of their burn pit. If you have the opportunity, let them know we appreciate this.

Student employees were Jesse Fox of Omena and Graham Kelly of Suttons Bay.

## SUMMARY:

The meadow restoration work this year focused on the “gravel pit” area bordering Omena Point Road at the north end of our property. This work primarily involved removal of shrubs and small trees encroaching the clearing, eliminating the “moonscape” appearance of the gravel pit, and planting native plants. Additional work was carried out on other portions of the project to expand and fine tune earlier efforts. Expense for this year’s effort, including maintenance earlier in the summer, was \$3175. This was in line with the Board’s approval to expand the “work bee” program for this year to two days instead of one and to carry out maintenance in June.

Specifically we –

- Mowed the entire trail system in mid-June, removed fallen trees and branches from the trails and spread wood chips.
- Cut and removed a large number of small trees and shrubs encroaching the gravel pit clearing on the north and south sides. Most of these were trucked to the Kal Excavating pit – others were dragged into the woods out of site.
- Brush hogged the entire area to clean it up.
- Bulldozed the gravel pit itself to eliminate the moonscape appearance.
- Created a trail link across the east end of the gravel pit clearing to connect with the main trail to the south.
- Sprayed for poison ivy. This was a banner year for poison ivy growth. It was everywhere. We sprayed more than 22 gallons of herbicide. Most of the trail system in the project needed treatment – in several locations two applications were necessary. We also treated for poison ivy in some open areas where large patches were prevalent. Due to this effort, we anticipate that future control will be easier.
- Cut and treated numerous Balsam Poplar saplings in the gravel pit.
- Planted more than 60 native plants, consisting of wild flowers, Little Bluestem Grass, and White Pine saplings.
- Marked the north and east OWA property lot line from Omena Point Road extending south through the woods.

- Removed a large number of Autumn Olive invasive shrubs and treated the cut stumps with herbicide. Some of these were over ten feet high. There are still several remaining that need to be addressed in the future.
- Cleared a connecting trail from the Lake Street public access around the end of Mougey Lake and connecting to the previously developed trail system. We also removed the poison ivy infesting this link of the trail.
- Widened the “appendix” clearing and added a picnic table.
- Added three more Bluebird nest boxes; two at the gravel pit clearing and one at the west side of the main clearing.
- Re-mowed the main clearing to address the spread of Bracken ferns and blackberries.
- Removed a few more stumbling stubs in the trail ways.
- Added signage throughout the trail system. Many thanks to Chuck Dickerson. A chain was added across the main trail south of the parking lot. This was considered necessary after encountering outsider vehicles in the middle of the woods on a few occasions. The plan is to leave this unlocked so that emergency vehicles would have access. We believe the presence of the chain and accompanying sign will discourage unauthorized vehicle traffic.

#### OBSERVATIONS:

The planting of native flowers has been a learning experience. The plan was to plant natives that will spread and as time goes by become widespread and self-sustaining. This is still the plan. We’ve found that some natives don’t grow well in our soil or habitat, and some are eaten by deer. From the first two years we found that certain native flowers are doing great – Coreopsis, Yellow Coneflowers, Purple Coneflower and Heliopsis. Although more difficult to see and appreciate; Spiderwort, Beardtongue and a Sky Blue Aster are also doing well. The Coreopsis blooms in June while the coneflowers and Heliopsis are later in the summer and early fall. This year we added Ironweed to give us more red/purple color. We are also blessed with numerous native flowers that we didn’t plant but are now thriving since our clearing effort. These include hundreds of Black-eyed Susans, several species of Goldenrods, Oxeye Daisy (non-native), Beardtongue, White Yarrow, Asters, Fleabane and several others. We have mostly planted larger plants from #1 pots to give them a better chance. We added potting soil and mulch, and provided water until the first good rain.

In the gravel pit, we planted clumps of Little Bluestem grass. We hope these will eventually grow and spread into islands of grass. We need to be patient as we know that Little Bluestem takes a few years to really get established.

We now have seven Bluebird nesting boxes and two more for Flickers. This spring we had our first nesting birds – one pair of Tree Swallows. This is a good start. We had a mouse nest in one box so we added aluminum sheeting to the posts to keep the mice out. We're expecting more nesting birds each year.

#### FUTURE OF THE RECOVERED MEADOWS:

The three year recovery project as approved by the OWA Board has now been completed. We believe that all of the objectives were achieved and are pleased with results. Many OWA members have expressed their satisfaction with the natural area we can visit and enjoy.

There will now be a need to maintain the areas that have been improved. It is recommended that the Board authorize funding to pay a commercial service to carry out annual maintenance. We believe this can be accomplished for \$500 to \$1000 per year which seems reasonable. The recommended annual maintenance should include the following:

- Walk the entire trail system in mid June to remove trees or branches that have fallen into or across the trail – probably will require a chainsaw. It may also be necessary to trim out branches that are drooping into the trails.
- In mid June, mow the entire trail system.
- Add and spread woodchips as needed to retard grass from taking over the trails.
- Spray the trails for poison ivy.
- Other maintenance or enhancements as determined by the Board or recommended by the Conservation Committee.

Project Co-Chairs

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