



WAUKESHA COUNTY LAND CONSERVANCY
RARE OAK WOODLAND
CONSERVATION PROJECT



THE MEYER PROPERTY

A GLOBALLY IMPERILLED ECOSYSTEM

The Meyer Property is an 83-acre, high quality, remnant oak ecosystem. Oak ecosystems are globally imperiled, meaning that this will be one of the most important property acquisitions that WCLC makes. This property is home to a rare sedge fen and the state threatened kittentail, which will add to the biodiversity of Waukesha County. Kevin Doyle of the WDNR found that this area of Waukesha County has been identified as the best opportunity for kittentails in the state and, possibly, the world.

A part of WCLC's Mukwonago River Project Area, a stream that connects to the Mukwonago River, is located on the property and provides large block habitat area to help wildlife find necessities like food and water. The Mukwonago River alone is home to 59 species of fish, seven of which are listed as endangered, threatened, or species of special concern.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OAK WOODLANDS

Intact oak woodlands are now one of the rarest plant communities on earth. They create ideal habitat by providing food, shelter, and nesting sites for a variety of wildlife. Nearly every part of an oak tree, from the roots, to the bark and branches provide cover, nesting sites, and food for salamanders, lizards, frogs, toads, bats, and over 80 mammal species and 170 bird species.

Many of these creatures rely primarily or exclusively on insects for nourishment. Even though they are on the decline, degraded oak woodlands still remain, and can and *need* to be restored because they are a source of food and habitat and are critically important for wildlife as a keystone species.

WHY ARE THESE IMPORTANT ECOSYSTEMS IMPERILLED?

Development, urban expansion, roadways, and natural disturbances are all adding to the decline and fragmentation of these oak ecosystems.

In addition, invasive species are beginning to shade out young oaks, and oaks evolved in a space where fires were more common than they are today, so oaks are not able to thrive like they once were.





WHAT IS A KEYSTONE SPECIES?

A keystone species is a plant that plays a unique and crucial role in its ecosystem. Without keystone species, an ecosystem would be dramatically different or even cease to exist altogether. The loss of one species from this type of community can have a disproportionately large effect on the entire community—like oaks. Oak trees support more wildlife than the maple or basswood tree. Over 500 species of insect live and feed on oaks, and many of these insects proved food for both nesting birds and the 350 different species of birds that migrate through Waukesha County twice each year. A number of these migratory bird species prefer oaks over other native tree species for food and other resources. Some of the birds that depend on oaks include the red-headed woodpecker, eastern whip-poor-will, and cerulean warbler, which are all on the decline.

STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESCRIBED BURNS

There are a number of important stewardship methods that WCLC will use to continue the restoration that Pam Meyer has already invested in:

- Invasive Species Removal
- Prescribed Burns

Often times, oak woodlands require a periodic stabilizing disturbance in the form of fire in order to maintain their structure and diversity. Because frequent fire played a significant role in the development of much of Wisconsin's native plant communities, many plant and animal species now depend on fire for their continued existence. In fact, many native trees have even evolved adaptations to protect themselves from fire injuries, such as thick bark.



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