



LEAFLET

Fontenelle Forest News | Spring 2023

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Top, left: Santa at Winter Wonderland (December 2022); Top, right: Students created moon and stars paintings during astronomy week at Mudpies (January 2023).
Bottom, left: Campers practicing their archery skills at Winter Break Camp (January 2023); Bottom, right: Participants experimenting with a portable wind tunnel during the Do Space at the Forest event (February 2023).

Cover image: The buds of an oak tree beginning to open.

REMEMBERING CLEM KLAPHAKE

Clement Klaphake was a long-time member and volunteer of Fontenelle Forest who passed in December 2022.

Raised in rural Minnesota, Clement “Clem” Klaphake’s time spent outdoors as a young person developed his ability to identify birds in the wild. In addition to being an environmentalist and professor, Klaphake was a lifelong birder and embraced the role of being a birding mentor to many.

Shortly after earning his Master of Arts from the University of Northern Colorado in 1971, Klaphake moved to Nebraska and became a professor of sociology, anthropology and environmental science at Bellevue University. Outside of his teaching in a classroom setting, Klaphake was a dedicated volunteer for several conservation organizations, including Fontenelle Forest.

Klaphake started volunteering at Fontenelle Forest in the 1980’s with the Raptor Program. He used his inclination for teaching and vast knowledge of birds to benefit the Forest by leading birding programs, classes and hikes on a regular basis.

Linda Dennis, former Fontenelle Forest employee and current volunteer, helped train Klaphake to work with the raptors. Dennis and Klaphake volunteered at educational birding programs together for over 20 years. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they were a part of the same birding group.

“I learned from him right up until he left for Colorado [to be with his family]. He always taught us things you couldn’t learn from a book, that only someone with his years and years of birding experience could know,” Dennis said.

His love for nature, especially birds, was a gift he shared with many. From assisting in the training of other volunteers to work with



Clem Klaphake leading a birding hike at Fontenelle Forest.



Clem Klaphake with Aero, a Peregrine Falcon and Fontenelle Forest raptor ambassador. Klaphake often volunteered with the Forest’s Raptor Program.

Fontenelle Forest’s raptor ambassadors to encouraging the naturalist educators to learn their birding basics, he was enthusiastic about sharing his knowledge.

Remembered for being generous with his time, Klaphake received an Outstanding Volunteer Award for 39 years of service in 2019 from Fontenelle Forest. During his many years as a volunteer, he also served on Fontenelle Forest’s Board of Directors from 1995 to 1996. His impact goes far beyond the staff, volunteers and visitors of Fontenelle Forest, as he maintained affiliations with Audubon Society of Omaha, The Nature Conservancy, HawkWatch and more.

“Clem was the real deal when it came to birding. He taught so many of us and was a huge part of inspiring the next generation of naturalists and volunteers,” said friend and fellow Fontenelle Forest volunteer, Robert Wells.

Klaphake’s impact will extend far beyond the individuals he shared his passion with directly. His legacy will last for generations to come.

FIELD NOTES *From the Forest*

*Deborah Woracek,
Naturalist Educator*

These field notes are based on past observations. Due to the double-whammy of climate change and our past droughts, you may notice some of these sightings on earlier dates or maybe not even see them this year!



April

Look for the first of the swallows returning from their winter ground. The earliest Purple Martin will search for a suitable habitat for raising a family. By the end of April, you should see goslings on the Great Marsh toodling behind an adult Canada Goose.



May

In the forest, wildflowers will bloom before the trees make the trails too shady. Look for mauve or purple Timber Phlox or the invasive Dame’s Rocket. If we have a wet spring, you should be able to see the tiny blue Siberian Squill, yellow Downy Violet or burgundy native Columbine.



June

From the end of May to early June the animal population in the Forest will grow by leaps and bounds. Fawns will start popping up along our trails, perhaps even along the second or third loop of the Boardwalk. Beaver, muskrat, coyotes and mink are all beginning to wean this year’s young. These are certainly exciting times to be on our trails.

Let us know what you see along our trails by emailing info@fontenelleforest.org or tagging [@FontenelleForest](https://www.instagram.com/FontenelleForest) on social media.

DONOR SERVICES UPDATE

Donor & Visitor Services Team

A new year brings a new opportunity for reflection. Looking back at 2022 and ahead to 2023, Fontenelle Forest’s staff and board are grateful for our amazing member, donor and partner communities who continue to support our mission of conservation, education and outdoor recreation.

Last spring, we highlighted our three-year funding initiative focused on repairing, modernizing and updating basic operating functions of all properties and buildings, as well as enhancing the guest experience. We began this work in late 2021 and expect all projects to be completed by 2024. In total, we anticipate \$2.5 million in expenditures. We are proud to share that as of February 2023, we have raised \$1.6 million and are having preliminary conversations for the needed remaining funds.

This initiative has actively prioritized deferred maintenance, which addresses important updates for the safety of our staff and all guests. This work included significant concrete replacement, HVAC work, fire panel replacement and exterior repair. These upgrades have been necessary to strengthen Fontenelle Forest’s operational health, while also improving the visitor experience and the ability to remain a safe, exciting destination within the region.

With these critical infrastructure needs completed, we can now focus our attention to improving the overall guest experience. These improvements include renovating Acorn Acres and updating all wayfinding signage at our Nature Center, Riverview Boardwalk, trails and Neale Woods.

The highly anticipated Acorn Acres reopening will take place fall of this year. The reimagined Acorn Acres will feature natural playscapes and educational experiences for children of all ages and abilities, and their families.

The historically significant Camp Brewster is also undergoing improvements, including technology upgrades, foundation and exterior repairs, and bathroom and kitchen updates. We look forward to welcoming more programs, rentals and staff retreats at Camp Brewster in the coming year.

Looking ahead to 2024, we plan to focus efforts on interpretative signage, building a small workshop at Neale Woods and repairing the retaining wall and walkway in the Raptor Woodland Refuge.

Outside of this initiative work, our priorities have been on deepening partnerships with the community and enhancing our member experiences. We look forward to another year of engagement with you —our valued friends— who help make our work in conservation, nature-based education and equitable access to urban green space possible. Thank you for your ongoing support of Fontenelle Forest in 2023!



ACORN ACRES UPDATE

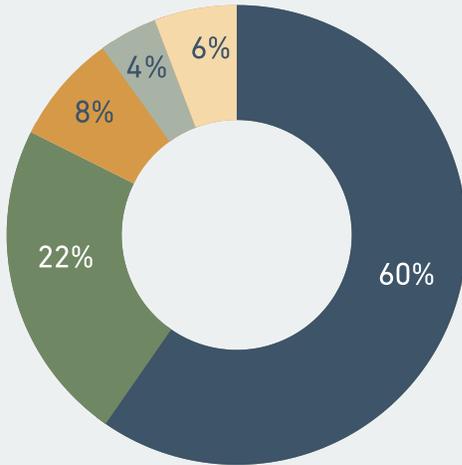
Nearly six months ago, the first stages of Acorn Acres’ renovations began. Fontenelle Forest’s vision is for Acorn Acres to be a place for all children to be creative and use their imagination for unstructured play. Fontenelle Forest and HDR are currently finalizing the design of the new nature-based play area and construction is anticipated to begin this spring.

We look forward to seeing kids and their families play, learn and connect with nature upon the reopening of Acorn Acres in the fall of this year.

2022 FINANCIAL REPORT

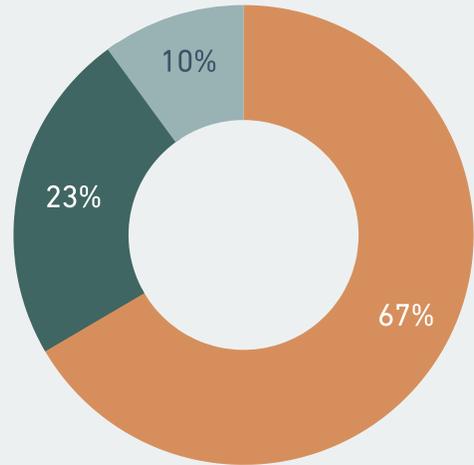
Dawn Jensen, Director of Finance & Administration

REVENUES, GAINS & OTHER SUPPORT



Contributions & Grants	\$ 1,666,657
Memberships & Admissions	\$ 616,427
Programs & Workshops	\$ 208,161
Guild Support, Net	\$ 112,479
Other Revenues	\$ 157,824
Total Operating Revenues & Support	\$ 2,761,548
Investment Income (Loss), Net	\$ (1,449,248)
Total Revenues & Support	\$ 1,312,300

EXPENSES



Program Services	\$ 1,838,402
Management & General	\$ 646,379
Fundraising	\$ 277,864
Total Expenses	\$ 2,762,645

Loss on Disposal of Property & Equipment	\$ 3,984
Total Expenses and Losses	\$ 2,766,629

INCREASE/DECREASE IN NET ASSETS \$ (1,454,329)

FUNDING SOURCES

Fontenelle Forest is sustained by a diverse revenue stream, due in large part to the generous support of our members, guests, donors and community partners. Almost 64% of the Forest's 2022 operating revenues were contributed by individuals, foundations and corporate donors. Another 30% of operating revenues were generated from annual memberships, daily admissions and educational programs and activities. The remaining 6% of 2022 operating revenues were generated by gift shop sales, space rentals and other miscellaneous sources. Reported separately from 2022 operating revenues is a net unrealized loss on

the endowment portfolio, reflective of the 2022 investment market performance.

SPENDING POLICY AND OPERATING EXPENSES

The Board of Directors reviews and approves the annual operating budget to ensure that spending decisions are in line with the strategic direction of the Forest. In 2022, 67% of total expenditures were on program services including education, raptor programs, land stewardship and visitor services at the Nature Center. Management and general expenses totaled about 23%, with fundraising expenditures at 10% of total spend.

2022 FINANCIAL REPORT

(Continued)

ENDOWMENT DRAWS

The Forest withdraws 5% of the endowment fund balance each year to support the operating and overhead expenses of the Forest. The balance used to determine the annual draw is based on a rolling three-year average market value of the fund as of the last day of each year.

ENDOWMENT FUND

The Forest has adopted investment and spending policies for the endowment that attempt to provide a predictable stream of funding for operations while seeking to maintain the purchasing power of the endowment assets. The Forest invests the endowment fund in professionally managed portfolios that contain money market funds, exchange traded funds and mutual funds. The primary investment objective for the endowment fund is long-term growth of capital. The secondary investment objective is preservation of principal and purchasing power.

OPERATING AND CAPITAL RESERVE FUNDS

The Forest has established operating and capital reserve funds to ensure that the Forest can maintain financial stability during times of unexpected financial need. The reserves are funded at the discretion of the Executive Director and the Board of Directors through the allocation of surplus unrestricted operating funds. The goal is to fund the operating reserve at 50% of the annual operating budget and the capital reserve fund at a \$500k balance.

VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

Volunteers are critical to the successful fulfillment of the Forest's mission. Forest volunteers can be seen working on trails and conservation projects, maintaining the grounds and facilities, providing raptor and education programs, serving as docents at the Nature Center, providing raptor care and making apple pies for the gift shop, among other support activities. Collectively, Forest volunteers contributed 5,266 hours of time to the Forest and its mission in 2022. Although not reflected on the financial statements, the estimated value* of Forest

ASSETS

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$	892,744
Accounts Receivable	\$	56,411
Promises to Give, Net	\$	400,995
Grants Receivable, Net	\$	254,379
Inventory	\$	27,270
Prepaid Expenses	\$	31,132
Investments	\$	7,495,100
Property, Buildings & Equipment, Net	\$	7,226,803
TOTAL ASSETS	\$	16,384,834

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$	88,576
Payroll Liabilities	\$	62,632
Deferred Revenue	\$	194,993
Other	\$	6,759
Total Liabilities	\$	352,960

Net Assets

Without Donor Restrictions		
Undesignated	\$	7,578,360
Board-designated Endowment	\$	661,912
Board-designated Reserves	\$	489,080
Total Without Donor Restrictions	\$	8,729,352
With Donor Restrictions	\$	7,302,522
Total Net Assets	\$	16,031,874
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$	16,384,834

volunteers in 2022 was over \$144,000. The Forest Board of Directors and staff are grateful to the many volunteers who dedicate their time and talents to the mission of the Forest.

**The Independent Sector established the estimated value of each volunteer hour in Nebraska at \$27.44 (April 2022).*

FEATURED PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Experience spring at Fontenelle Forest!
Check out these upcoming events to get outside and enjoy nature.



Pileated Woodpecker & Spring Bird Hike | March 25

Grab your binoculars and join us for a Naturalist-guided hike in search of the rare Pileated Woodpecker and spring migratory birds.



Seniors Understanding Nature | April 11 & May 9

This program is for adults ages 55 and up who enjoy learning about the natural world. See lecture topics on our website.



Family Fun Friday | April 7

Join us for a fun-filled night meeting and learning about Nebraska's native animals, and playing nature-inspired games!



Family Adventure Day | April 29

Need some outdoor family fun? Bring the family for an exciting day of archery, yard games, s'mores and hiking!

Summer Camps Start June 5

Explore the outdoors through nature-based activities at Fontenelle Forest this summer! See a full list of camp themes and dates and register today at FontenelleForest.org/Camps.

Fontenelle Forest is seeking summer camp counselors

Help our team inspire the next generation of nature lovers. Learn more & apply at FontenelleForest.org/Careers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPDATES



April 22 Earth Day at Mulhall's

Join us at Mulhall's to celebrate Earth Day! As Mulhall's 2023 Round-up Partner, when you shop at Mulhall's you'll have the opportunity to round your purchases up to the nearest dollar to support Fontenelle Forest throughout the entire year.



May 29 Extended summer hours begin

From Memorial Day to Labor Day we offer extended hours so you can spend more time on the trails.
M-F: 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
S-S: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



June 17 Native Plant Sale

Join the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum for the annual Native Plant Sale at Camp Brewster.



July 29 Beer on the Boardwalk

Save the date for Beer on the Boardwalk 2023! Additional details coming soon. Visit our website at FontenelleForest.org/Beer.

See our full calendar of events and register online at FontenelleForest.org/Calendar



Fontenelle Forest
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Bellevue, NE 68005

FROM THE ARCHIVES: *Life at Fontenelle's Trading Post*

Catherine Kuper, Volunteer Archivist

When you hear the term “trading post” you might think of something like the South Dakota tourist destination, Wall Drug. The Trading Post that Lucien Fontenelle managed in the early 1820’s was not a store in this same sense.

People from the surrounding native tribes including the Omaha, Otoe and Pawnee did trade vegetables, berries and game with the post’s inhabitants in exchange for guns, fabrics and metal products such as kettles and knives. However, the primary function of the post was more like a warehouse with items and personnel that would be shipped west.

Because of its location eight miles above the Platte River, the Trading Post served as a significant stop on the Missouri River. Fontenelle’s Trading Post received shipments by way of keelboats from St. Louis suppliers in the spring when the river was navigable. The materials would be stored until early summer when they would be transported west by horse and mule pack trains into the Rocky Mountains. In the fall, those same pack trains would return to the post with loads of furs that would be sent down river to St. Louis.



A horseshoe and pliers found during the 1972 excavation of the Fontenelle Trading Post.

The Trading Post also had to provide for the employees of the Missouri Fur Company who were charged with sorting, packing and transporting goods west and then moving furs back east. At times, there could have been as many as 100 people living at the post along with an equal number of horses and mules. Additional buildings were needed to house, feed and support these men, as well as a blacksmith shop and space to care for pack animals.

Fontenelle Trading Post Exhibit Opens in April

Fontenelle Forest is commemorating the 200-year anniversary of the Fontenelle Trading Post with a new exhibit in the Baright Gallery at the Nature Center. Learn about the region’s indigenous history, the effects of colonization and more.