



Educational Farm & Nature Preserve

Farm Connection by Pauline Scott Farm & Nature Guide & Board of Trustees

Published in *The Delaware Gazette*: April 2021

IN MEMORY OF SHEPHERDESS MARGE FINNEGAN

March did not go out like a lion at Stratford Ecological Center on Liberty Road with temperatures on March 30 in the 60's and sunny, and on March 31 dropping into the 30's with grey skies. April Fool's Day caught us out at 25F at 7:30 am when we had invited the Delaware Area Chamber of Commerce members to join us beside the patio fire for coffee, donuts, conversation and a renewal of connections. An announcement at 8:30 am that the first of twin goats had been born caused a mass exodus to the barn to witness a sight few people see these days.

We are sad to share that Marge Finnegan, a great friend and supporter of Stratford since moving to Ohio in 1991, passed away on April 3 at age 91. Marge taught 1st and 2nd grade in Michigan before turning her attention to sheep farming on St. Rt. 257 in Delaware. She volunteered many times at our annual Harvest Fair sharing her knowledge of sheep and spinning with young visitors. Our Library will become home to some of her book collection. Marge was in all sense of the word a true Gentlewoman.

In the fall of 2013 Marge donated two Corriedale ewes we named Marge and Sylvia. She purchased them from Gene Logsdon when he disbanded his flock. Gene was a man who contributed greatly to Ohio farming knowledge and the presence of his sheep were a good reminder to us. When Marge began decreasing her flock of Tunis sheep, she donated the last three ewes to us in August 2019. The ewe tagged #5308 is the best of our flock due to her strong breeding instinct and deeply caring attitude towards her offspring. Marge was well known for her white Great Pyrenees dog named Sasha who protected the sheep, and Millie her black and white English Shepherd herding dog. Both have been adopted, Sasha is happy on 13 acres in Ohio protecting goats and chickens, and Millie has mended a gentleman's heart in upstate New York who lost his border collie.

Back on the farm, a water leak was discovered in mid-March in the barn. We brought in local excavator Bernie Schnees and his backhoe to dig out the water line. For easy access it lies under the only non-concreted pen in the barn. There is a natural spring under the barn, but it was not the culprit as a pipe had ruptured. He was able to replace it and finish the job within three hours. Bernie was also responsible a few years ago for a new land bridge connecting fields 8 & 9 next to Rt. 23, allowing us access with heavy machinery.

The spelt planted last fall is visible in field 1, the north half of field 2, and the middle of field 3. Prior to the rains on April 8, Farmer Jeff renovated ground with a spike tooth harrow and planted Festulolium, a forage grass of fescue and rye, in the east half of the North Pasture, the south half of field 6, and the east half of field 7.

The paw paw coop chickens are back in the portable chicken coop and will be released daily into the equipment lane until the coop is moved to the North Pasture. An automatic solar closure created by an Eagle Scout should be in place by June. The weak chicken who could not manage to climb the portable coop plank remains in the paw paw coop. She will act as matriarch to the

chicks who moved there after hatching in the library incubator and spending time in the hutch in the Education Room.

The sheep and lambs are deeply grazing the grass in the lane alongside the chickens. The goats are by themselves in the barnyard, as they prefer to snack and can be quite aggressive around the sheep as they seek fresh growth. The sheep will be sheared on April 17 but unfortunately the event cannot be open to the public due to Covid restrictions.

A new observation beehive, with double pane windows on each end, has been placed in the barn aisle. Visitors can view four frames on each side and monitor what is happening in the hive. A hole in the barn wall allows the bees to enter and exit. We are happy to share that eighteen out of our twenty hives survived the winter. If a hive has more than one Queen, the old Queen takes half her sisters and swarms to find a new home. Should you see a cluster of honeybees please call us as we have a list of people who will collect the swarm.

April is Ohio Native Plant Month, and an in-depth article can be found on our web site. We invite you to celebrate Earth Day at Stratford on April 22 from 10-1 pm and April 23 from 1-3 pm by registering at www.earthdaycolumbus.org On May 1 we are offering two time slots at 6 am and 8:15 am for small groups to take part in our Birds, Blooms and Breakfast. The first of our Regenerative Agriculture Farm Series for Adults starts today and continues on the 3rd Saturday of the month through October from 10-Noon. The second of our Meet the Pollinator Series takes place from 1-3 pm and 3:15-5:15 pm today and through October. We are still not open to the public during our normal hours but there are times each week when you can visit. Details and registration for visits or the above special events may be found on our web site.

Pauline Scott is a farm and nature guide at Stratford Ecological Center, 3083 Liberty Road, Delaware. She can be reached at 740 363 2548 or by email at info@stratfordecologicalcenter.org Stratford's website is www.StratfordEcologicalCenter.org

Stratford Ecological Center
3083 Liberty Road • Delaware • Ohio • 43015
740-363-2548 • info@stratfordecologicalcenter.org
www.stratfordecologicalcenter.org