Spring 2017 • Vol. 26, No.1

SWMLC
Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy

# Landscapes

## BIG MARSH FARM
### CALHOUN COUNTY

story on page 4

photo by Emily Wilke

Red fox family • Ed Knox

# Tamarack Springs Conservation Easement

I interviewed Ed and Kathy Knox on a mud-colored day in late March. It was late afternoon and after a hectic hurtle down I-94, I arrived at their home near Mattawan in Van Buren County feeling jangled and anxious. The Knoxes have donated a 26-acre conservation easement to SWMLC and, as the newsletter designer, this was **my** first chance to meet them and thank them for their incredible generosity.

I was put at ease right away by Ed and Kathy's friendliness and their warm, peaceful house. Open, bright, and filled with art — most with nature themes — the Knoxes' home seems to embody their approach to the world. We sat at the long dining room table that was built for large family gatherings and talked about nature, art, animals, and conservation.

Hand-planted tamarack • Ed Knox

Later, Ed and Kathy showed me around the property. The centerpiece of Tamarack Springs Conservation Easement (CE) is a large spring-fed pond that spills over a dam into the winding East Branch of the Paw Paw River. The pond was built by owners past who expanded an existing pond by digging and constructing the dam, but it has since become naturalized and is a haven for wildlife. The pond's banks are wooded, and the upland areas are a mix of forest and oak savanna with a prairie opening that contains numerous rare plants.

Over the last 20 years, the East Branch of the Paw Paw River has been the focus of much conservation planning effort due to its botanical excellence and its connection to the larger Paw Paw River Watershed. And with its high-quality wetlands, high groundwater recharge, and nearly half mile of frontage on the East Branch of the Paw Paw, Tamarack Springs CE is a high-priority parcel for conservation.

It's obvious that the Knoxes love and take pride in their land, but I wasn't sure why they wanted to conserve it. So I asked. "I love the quiet," said Kathy. "I love to walk and snowshoe through the woods, seeing the changes and watching for wildlife." She told me about a mother fox that felt safe enough to leave her pups resting on the driveway, about a mink that clambered onto the window sill to peek inside the house, and a snapping turtle that has lumbered up from the small yard pond to lay her eggs for the last 30-odd years. Ed said that he can feel nature washing away the day's stress.

Ed and Kathy Knox • Amelia Hansen

But the ecological importance of the property isn't lost on the Knoxes. Ed added that, though he's not opposed to wise development, he knows that it's crucial to protect the Paw Paw River Watershed and keep development away from critical waterways like the East Branch – and that he feels a sense of protective stewardship toward it.

We strolled through the yard, admiring Kathy's beautiful, quilt-inspired paintings that adorn the outbuildings' walls and doors. Ed told me, "Bringing the land back to its natural state through the introduction of native trees and elimination of invasives is my creative outlet." And that turtle, and that mink? "Seeing more wildlife like that is a mark of success."

— Amelia Hansen

## Spirit Springs: Painting A Rosy Picture

Those familiar with Spirit Springs Sanctuary know that in addition to its world class wetlands, enchanting landscape, and intriguing stories, there are features of the preserve that don't paint such a rosy picture . . . or do they? Multiflora rose (Rosa multiflora) is one of the most frustrating and painful invasive plants out there, and is frequently found growing in sprawling thorny masses on wooded edges and in forest understories. Controlling this difficult species requires a multifaceted approach that uses a variety of treatment methods tied in tightly with the species' biology. At Spirit Springs, SWMLC stewardship crews began by simply knocking down the tangled rose stands with mechanical brush hogs, waiting for the inevitable flush of prickly re-sprouts. Months later, a single round of spraying with appropriate herbicide was conducted, followed by a prescribed burn that acted as the finishing blow. After this mechanical-chemical-elemental control method combo, volunteers took the next phase into their own hands by bringing in the natives! Sowing a variety of forest wildflower, grass, and sedge seeds — along with some "volunteer" transplants provided by Lynn Steil — we made sure that this newly vacated forest real estate will be filled by a diversity of native plant life. Visit the preserve soon and watch the backdrop of briars fade as charismatic natives like false mermaid, Jack-in-the-pulpit, woodland phlox, wild columbine, and doll's eyes cover new ground.

Volunteers knocking back the tenacious brambles beside the pond. Mitch Lettow

Termed "Integrated Pest Management" in the agricultural world, this thoughtful approach to controlling challenging species can reduce costs, chemical inputs, and time spent on control. — Mitch Lettow

# Goodbye and Congrats!

### Goodbye, Geoff!

After nine years with SWMLC's Land Protection staff, Geoff Cripe has moved on to a new job. Geoff, we will miss your energetic blend of lunacy, conscientiousness, intelligence, dedication, and sweet graciousness. Those folks at your new job are a bunch of lucky ducks!

### Congratulations, Bruce!

After two years as SWMLC's Stewardship Crew Leader, Bruce was recently promoted to Land Protection Specialist. Bruce grew up in rural Paw Paw, and then moved to Kalamazoo to attend WMU. Here, his broad interest in learning about human-environment interactions led to his decision to pursue a B.S. in Geography, with a minor in Environmental Studies, which he received in April 2017. After working outdoors to improve SWMLC's protected areas, Bruce is excited to work together with landowners in the community to protect and manage their land sustainably and indefinitely.

# For the Love of the Land

## BIG MARSH FARM

Larry and Jerrilyn Holcombs' connection to nature is reflected in the land that they've bought and sold over the last 50 years, always with the intent to improve each parcel's wildlife habitat. Jerrilyn might say, "Larry has never met a piece of land he didn't love", but she was in on it, too, and became attached to each parcel's unique qualities.

Emily Wilke

The Holcombs love the land so much that, back in 2004, they donated to SWMLC a conservation easement on their 248-acre Calhoun County property that includes Kinyon Lake and their residence, knowing that the wetlands and forest would be protected forever. At the time, Larry said, "It's good to know that this land will remain wild. We thank God for the wonderful opportunity to work with the great staff and volunteers at SWMLC in the past and into the future." Those prophetic words came true this past winter when the Holcombs again worked with SWMLC to place a conservation easement on Big Marsh Farm, an ecologically incredible 476-acre property that borders 980-acre Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary. Big, wet, and wild, these properties (along with that of the Battle Creek Kiwanis Club just to the west, home of Michigan Audubon's Cranefest) provide essential stopover habitat for migrating sandhill cranes and other waterfowl.

Larry and Jerrilynn Holcomb • courtesy of Larry Holcomb

Larry credits his deep appreciation for nature to his parents, Clifford and Bertha Holcomb, who shared their love of the land with their kids. Larry grew up fishing, hunting, trapping, and roaming parts of what is now Baker Sanctuary as well as Big Marsh Farm. These experiences created an intense love of the outdoors and fostered a desire for an occupation that would allow Larry to be outside as much as possible. He considered farming at first but later decided that the marshy wetness of most of the farm's acreage was too limiting.

So he went to college, where he met several mentors who helped shape his career path in the biological sciences. Larry received a BS from Olivet College, and a master's degree and PhD from Michigan State University, and later became a Certified Wildlife Biologist with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. His work in this field certainly got him outdoors; it involved biological and toxicological investigations of air, water, and soils – and their impacts on plants, animals, and people. His analyses took him around the world, giving him a solid background in assessing quality wildlife habitat.

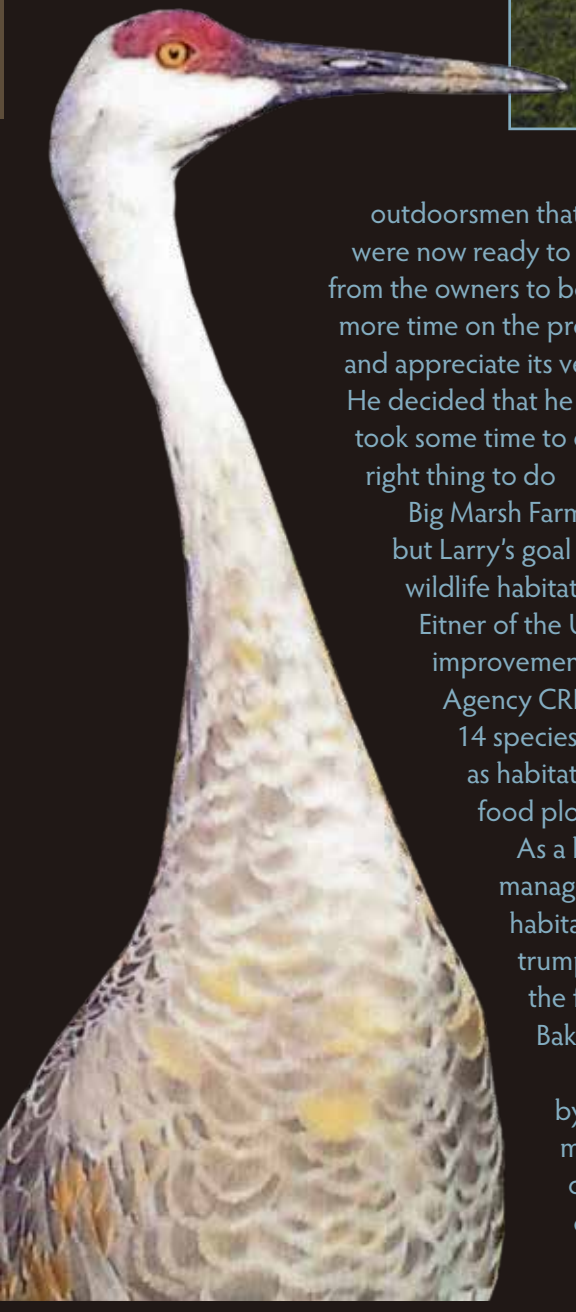
Fast forward to early 2008, when Larry discovered that the 476-acre Big Marsh Farm was for sale — a property purchased 21 years earlier by a group of ten

**RIGHT:** Sandhill cranes and deer foraging on two acres of oats planted specifically to benefit wildlife.

**LOWER RIGHT:** Big Marsh Eastern massasauga rattlesnake, a federally-endangered species.

**BELOW:** Big Marsh sandhill crane

Photos by Larry Holcomb



outdoorsmen that had dwindled to four that were now ready to sell. Larry received permission from the owners to bow hunt deer and, as he spent more time on the property, he grew to understand and appreciate its very special variety of habitats. He decided that he wanted to buy it, though it took some time to convince Jerrilyn that it was the right thing to do

Big Marsh Farm already had a great start, but Larry's goal was to make the best overall wildlife habitat in Michigan. So he invited Tom Eitner of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to assess the property and suggest possible improvements. The USFWS aided in clearing autumn olive from many acres, and Farm Service Agency CRP funds enabled creation of a 60-acre tallgrass prairie that includes more than 14 species of grasses and wildflowers. In addition, wet meadow areas have been managed as habitat for the federally-endangered Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake, and small wildlife food plots have been established.

As a biologist and avid deer hunter, Larry and family members practice deer management, especially to keep populations below the carrying capacity of the habitat. The Holcomb family is thrilled to observe that the property is home to nesting trumpeter swans and a rest stop for hundreds of ducks, geese, and sandhill cranes in the fall. The majority of these species utilize Big Marsh Farm as much as they do the Baker Sanctuary.

The Holcombs look forward to continuing their work to improve the land, by fighting invasive plant species, and managing the forests, grassland, and wet meadows. As for Larry, the satisfaction that he feels in spotting a mature buck that calls Big Marsh Farm his home is matched equally by the thrill of seeing a golden-crowned kinglet feeding just a few feet away.

— SWMLC staff with Larry Holcomb

## Partners in Conservation

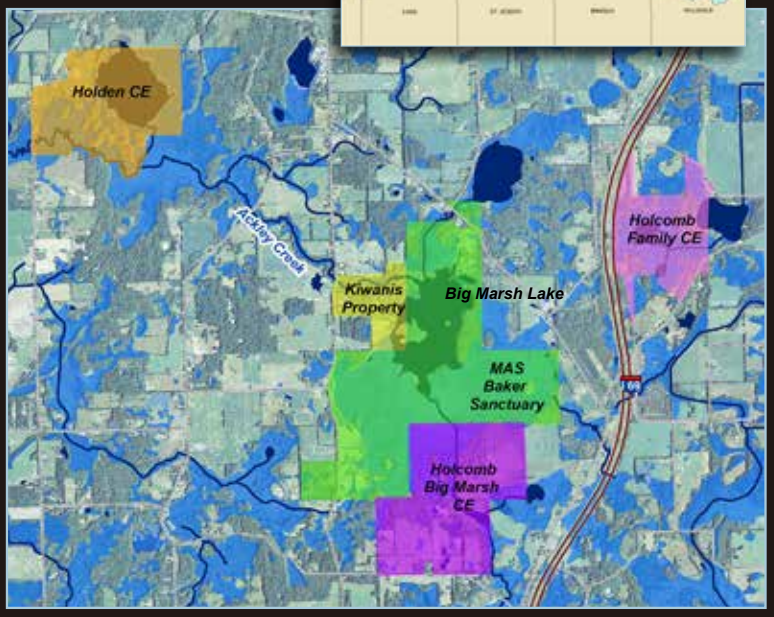
In August of 2016, SWMLC and the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council were awarded a two-year $530,000 matching grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to permanently conserve land in the Battle Creek River sub-Watershed. This award enables SWMLC to protect property with high-conservation values, and to conduct outreach to owners of high-priority properties within the watershed.

The project is based on the 2015 Kalamazoo River Watershed Conservation Plan developed by SWMLC, the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council and a group of master's students from the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources. The plan identified the most important parcels to protect for the best possible water quality within the entire 2,020 square mile watershed.

The Battle Creek River sub-Watershed is 307 square miles; mostly agricultural land but with large tracts of undeveloped forests and wetlands in the headwaters area. These wild headwaters include Ackley Creek, Big Marsh Lake, Wanadoga Creek, Waubascon Creek, and Clear Lake — which all flow into the Battle Creek River.

The Big Marsh Farm with its forested and prairie uplands, 140 acres of wetlands, and 4,300 feet of frontage on Ackley Creek is one of the most important properties to permanently conserve it for the long term water quality of Ackley Creek and the Battle Creek River.

The Battle Creek River Watershed (marked in magenta) is part of the Kalamazoo River Watershed (marked in pale green), which drains an area of approximately 2,020 square miles from eight counties. Map by Emily Wilke.




These conserved properties protect large portions of Ackley Creek and surrounding wetlands, all of which are important parts of the Battle Creek River Watershed. Wetlands are indicated with light blue; open bodies of water are darker blue. Map by Emily Wilke.

MDEQ watershed management grants help restore impaired waters — and protect high-quality waters — by reducing nonpoint sources of sediment, nutrients, and other contaminants. The grants are funded under the federal Clean Water Act - Section 319 and the Clean Michigan Initiative – Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Grants Program.

— SWMLC staff

## Gruiformes Guru

### Lawrence H. Walkinshaw 1904 – 1993

If only we could tell Lawrence H. Walkinshaw that The Big Marsh is protected forever. A resident of Battle Creek and dentist by trade, Dr. Walkinshaw was also an avid ornithologist and leading authority on cranes. Called "The Father of International Studies of Gruiformes" (the scientific classification of cranes), the North American Crane Working Group describes him as "a master bird observer, world crane lover, determined nest finder, and meticulous data collector."

Like Larry Holcomb, Dr. Walkinshaw wrote of boyhood days spent in The Big Marsh, "searching for marsh birds." Once common in the lower peninsula, sandhill cranes were so rare by 1921 that a teenaged Walkinshaw questioned a farmer's authority when the man identified three large flying birds as cranes. Hearing their "loud honking, wild to its very depth" again in 1930, Dr. Walkinshaw began to search The Big Marsh for cranes. His notes on the nests and nestlings that he found in the next few years of field work still stand as important milestones in the history of sandhill cranes in this area.

Dr. Walkinshaw died in 1993 at the age of 88, fifteen years before the Holcomb family bought The Big Marsh property and 23 years before it was protected by a conservation easement. Imagine how happy he would be to know that it will provide nesting habitat and migratory respite for sandhill cranes forever.

— Amelia Hansen

# celebrate!

## Please join us for a Celebration of Big Marsh Farm!

**Saturday June 3, 10 am - noon**
**Open to the public!**
RSVP to conserveland@swmlc.org
or 269-324-1600

Three more events geared toward conservation options for landowners, and four meetings for local governments and public officials, will be scheduled throughout the year.

**Check our website in the months ahead for details and directions for all of these events.**

Sometimes a body just ~~wants~~ **needs** to run in nature.

**We've recently mapped out trail running loops at two of our most popular preserves, Wolf Tree Nature Trails in Oshtemo and Chipman Preserve in Galesburg. These new 5k courses offer a refreshing and fun way to reach running, walking and fitness goals.**

**Give 'em a try!**

# What's White, Fuzzy, and UNWELCOME in Southwest Michigan?

Kelly Oten, North Carolina Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Jason Van Driesche, Bugwood.org

Bruce Watt, University of Maine, Bugwood.org

USDA Forest Service_Region 8 Archive USDA FS, Bugwood.org, CC-BY-3.0-US

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) (*Adelges tsugae*), is a forest pest that attacks and kills Eastern Hemlock trees. It's on the move in Michigan and has been reported in several counties along the lakeshore, including Allegan.

The tiny insects secrete white wax as they feed on the sap from hemlock needles, eventually killing entire branches. Over time, the tree's growth slows, it takes on a gray-green appearance, then dies. Eggs and young adelgids may be carried by birds and can travel on hemlock nursery trees, logs, and firewood.

Michigan's hemlock population is relatively old and very vulnerable to HWA. Chemical controls can be effective on smaller, individual trees, but biological controls are the best managment option in forests. Identify HWA by checking the underside of branches for white, waxy material at the base of the needles.

**To prevent spread, do not remove potentially infested material from the site!** Instead, take photos, note the location of the affected trees, and report it. If purchasing hemlock trees from a local nursery, please ask the nursery staff if their hemlock trees have been inspected and/or treated for HWA by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

### To report suspected forest pest infestations:

- **email:** MDA-Info@michigan.gov
- **phone:** MDARD Customer Service Center, 800-292-3939
- **learn more:** www.michigan.gov/hwa and www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/hwa
- Midwest Invasive Species Information Network: www.misin.msu.edu

# BOW IN THE CLOUDS

## A Preserve on the Rise!

**As one of our most popular and accessible preserves, the vision for Bow in the Clouds Preserve is one where community restores nature and nature restores community.**

Mitch Lettow

Mitch Lettow

This grand vision may take years to achieve, but SWMLC and its dedicated volunteer base are working hard to get there! Here's what's been happening lately:

- We recently installed an entrance sign, tacked up markers on selected trails, and tended the parking lot wildflower planting.
- Dedicated volunteer students, neighbors, and citizens braved the cold drizzle to help improve habitat along Spring Valley Creek on a January workday celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- We applied for a $7,000 grant from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation to construct a barrier-free loop trail — and were thrilled (and grateful!) that they liked the proposal so much that they increased it to $12,000! SWMLC will soon be seeking matching funds to ensure that this trail — complete with benches, a trailhead, and scenic overlooks — becomes a reality in the coming years. We plan to hold an official "grand opening" for Bow in the Clouds once the barrier-free access project is completed.

## Join us for a Special Workday at Bow in the Clouds Preserve Earth Day, Saturday, April 22!

Supported by the generosity of Great Lakes Brewing Company, SWMLC volunteers will work on a variety of outdoor stewardship tasks before retiring to the Kalamazoo Beer Exchange for a well-earned complimentary pint on Great Lakes Brewing Company! Your participation is always appreciated, but space at this special workday is limited. **You must RSVP** to make sure you get in on this Earth Day Workday Celebration, so email conserveland@swmlc.org or call 269-324-1600 right away!

Common Loon • U.S. Forest Service, Northern Region

# Generations of Appreciation for Fair Lake

At the headwaters of southern Barry County's Augusta Creek lies Fair Lake, an ecologically rich and diverse lake more fittingly called "Spectacular Lake".

Only a few houses dot Fair Lake's pristine five-mile shoreline, which has helped ensure the continued health of this beautiful lake. Though its human inhabitants have more recently noticed its unique ecological qualities, the lake's healthy habitat has been appreciated by generations of wildlife, including the southernmost nesting pair of common loons in the continental United States. Year after year, the loons have chosen to make their nest on a human-made platform at the north end of Fair Lake.

"My parents bought land on Fair Lake in 1938. Even back then, an older neighbor of theirs said the loons had been here for years, so they've been here for at least 90 years and probably much longer," stated donor Noel Hayward. "The loons are so special to us and we would like to do whatever we can to help them continue to make their home here on the lake."

So when a large natural tract of land on Fair Lake recently went up for sale, Noel and her husband, Larry, decided to purchase the property and donate it to SWMLC so that it would be conserved forever. The 66-acre Fair Lake Preserve has over 1,500 feet of frontage on the north end of the lake and contains species that are indicative of the highest quality wetlands in southwest Michigan. Uncommon species such as pitcher plants and grass-pink orchids line the banks of this beautiful lake.

"Fair Lake Preserve is SWMLC's sixth Barry County nature preserve and is critical for wetland and water conservation in the headwaters of the Augusta Creek Watershed, which ultimately flows into the Kalamazoo River," said Conservation Projects Manager Emily Wilke. "Over 600 of the 4,700 acres that SWMLC has conserved in Barry County are in this watershed, an area of focus for land protection for the next several years".

Conserving Barry County is an ongoing labor of love for Larry and Noel. In 1997, the Haywards protected their beloved Blue Ridge Farm in Orangeville Township with a donated conservation easement, later adding adjacent parcels to create a 330-acre contiguous property that is forever conserved with SWMLC.

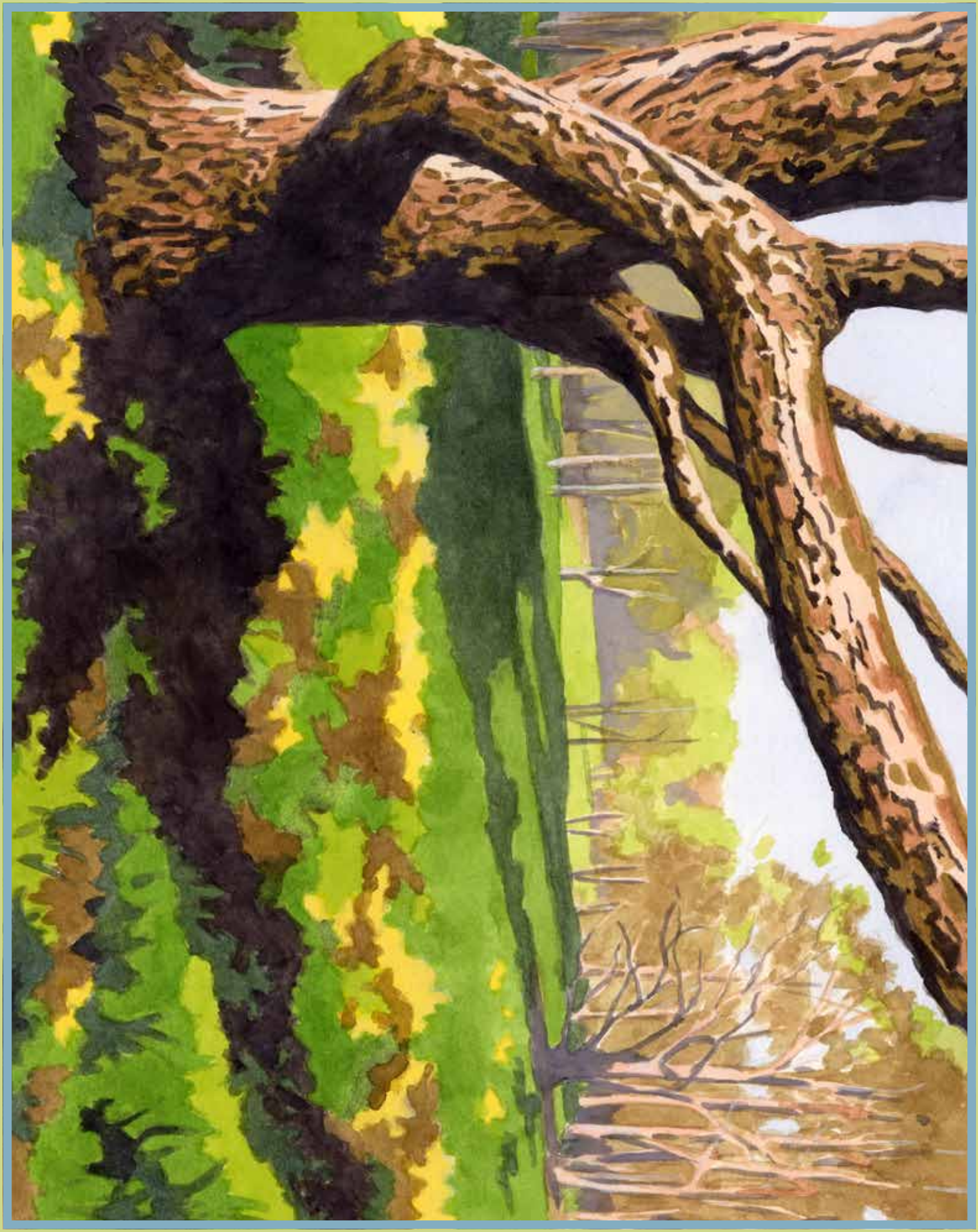
The Haywards' dedication to conservation is demonstrated in their creation of Barry County Bluebirds, a citizen science project that is part of Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch program. It began a few years ago when Larry placed 50 bluebird nest boxes at Blue Ridge Farm. The project expanded when Larry noted that cemeteries, with their open spaces and few trees, mimic the preferred savanna habitat of Eastern bluebirds. He obtained permission to place boxes in 40 of the 47 Barry County cemeteries — a total of 331 nest boxes! The Haywards' daughter, Tiffany Greenfield, felt that the information generated by all these nest boxes could make an important contribution to Cornell Lab's database, so she set up a detailed data collection system that includes GPS locators. Ten volunteers monitor and maintain the boxes, and the project has been met with enthusiastic community support. You can find out more about this inspiring, grassroots project by visiting Barry County Bluebirds' Facebook page and Cornell Lab's NestWatch page (www.nestwatch.org).

"The Haywards are long-time SWMLC supporters with a deep commitment to Barry County's wildlife and rural character," said Wilke. "We are thrilled to help them protect this special natural area, and to be part of another great Hayward and Barry County conservation success story."

— SWMLC staff

Eastern Bluebird – Joan Eckhardt

Amelia Hansen



# SPRING IN THE PRESERVES!

## by SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN LAND CONSERVANCY

## April

### 9 Tike Hike & Egg Hunt at Chipman Preserve

What's that in the grass? It's a big beautiful egg! Separate areas for bigger and littler kids will ensure that everyone has a chance to find colorful treat-filled eggs.

### 20 Flyway Ramble Bird Walk at Black River Preserve

Black River Preserve offers excellent birding. We expect to see early-wave warblers, thrushes galore, and the local red-shouldered hawks.

### 20 Frog Walk at Spirit Springs Sanctuary

What's tiny, wet, and very loud? Help your kids find out by bringing them to this fun family event.

### 22 Earth Day Workday with Great Lakes Brewing Company

An afternoon of sweaty, outdoor volunteering at Bow in the Clouds Preserve — followed by a fun celebration of the day's progress at Kalamazoo Beer Exchange!

### 28 Kalamazoo Poetry Festival's Celebration of Local Poets

SWMLC is a sponsor of the 2017 Kalamazoo Poetry Festival. Join us for the opening event at Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, where local poets will read their works, followed by a reception.

## May

### 6 Family-Friendly Garlic Mustard Pull at Chipman Preserve

Few things satisfy like a mountain of garlic mustard-filled garbage bags! And it's a fun, easy way to teach your kids about volunteer community service.

### 11 Warbler Walkabout Bird Walk at Spirit Springs Sanctuary

This ecologically-rich preserve provides excellent habitat for many different species, plus we're likely to find warblers, warblers, warblers!

### 14 Mother's Day Tike Hike at Pilgrim Haven Natural Area

Hey dads! Help your little ones make a Mother's Day Nature Card while Mom spends a little "me time" at home. Or bring the whole family and enjoy nature together.

### 20 Portman Nature Preserve Sneak Peek Event

Please join us for the first-ever public opportunity to explore this big, new, and significant natural area!

### 27 Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones' 4th Annual Native Plant Sale at People's Food Co-Op

Make a difference! Support wildlife by selecting beautiful native plants for your yard and garden.

## June

### 3 Thank You Event at Holcomb's Big Marsh Farm Conservation Easement

Join us to celebrate the protection of this huge and important wetland that connects to other conserved land and provides vital habitat for sandhill cranes.

### 4 Family-Friendly Garlic Mustard Pull at Portman Nature Preserve

Family-friendly outdoor volunteering is a great way to connect with your kids while improving the land at our newest preserve.

### 10 HOP! Kickoff Event at Wolf Tree Nature Trails

Grab a hiking stick and let's get hoppin'! Learn more about HOP! on page 17 and on our website.

### 18 Father's Day "Trails and Ales" Tike Hike at Bow in the Clouds Preserve

Let your kids run amok outdoors, then meet up afterward at family-friendly One Well Brewing for food and drink.

### 24 Workday Premiere at Portman Nature Preserve

A great chance to connect with this land while pitching in to improve it. Of course, we will do some exploring, too!

SWMLC PULL-OUT CALENDAR POSTER

PRESERVES ARE ADMISSION-FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC EVERY DAY FROM DAWN TO DUSK

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR DIRECTIONS & DETAILS! • WWW.SWMLC.ORG

# Thank You. *We couldn't do it without you!*

**Welcome and thank you to our new members and supporters: October 1, 2016 - February 28, 2017.**

Thanks also to all who renewed their memberships, supported us through their United Way program, or contributed to our annual campaign, year-end appeal, and other fundraisers. Our sincere apologies for any omissions.

## New Members

### Little Brown Bat ($50+)

Dianne Braybrook
Mr. Kim Cauchy
Pamela Dehnke
Cathy deVelder
Janis and John Etzcorn
Ms. Sarah Fitzpatrick
Ms. Margo Foreman
Mr. Robert L. Hamel
Ann Klobucar
Robert Linderman
Mike Mazurkiewicz
Bette Pierman
Ms. Anna Joyce Watson

### Spotted Turtle ($100+)

Cindy Roman
Bob and Karen Kipp
Kent and Lauri Lindquist
Linda and W. Joseph Mills

### Cerulean Warbler ($250+)

Eileen Coscarelli

### Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake ($500+)

Dave and Sharon Groendyk

## Membership Renewals

### Little Brown Bat ($50+)

David and Wanda Aikens
Phil Albain
Susan Allen
Laura Andersen and Jackson Scholl
Robert Arvidson
Ralph E. Babcock
Mike Bailey
Joan Bauer
Richard Brewer and Katy Takahashi
Rudy and Diane Broekhuis
David and Barbara Brose
Rose Bundy
Marilyn Case
Judith Kay M. Chase
Leonard and Patricia Chase
Dallas Chester
James and Catherine Coury
C. Robert and Marcia Cowell
Geoffrey and Sarah Cripe
Patricia Crowley
Theodore Cummins
Jim and Jennifer Daniels
Randy Day and Betsy Floria
Mitzi DeLuca
Wayne and Marj Dennis
Carole Deutch
Suzanne Dixon
Alan and Sally Enderle
Connie and Steve Ferguson
Frank Finken
Dennis and Mary Frailing
Ann and John Fraser
Dr. Gabriela Freese
Kent and Jeryl Fuller
Nathan Geisler
Susan and John Gillett
Anthony and Grace Gilmore
Matthew Gorentz
Elmer R. Graber, DVM
Thomas Hagadone and Pamela Miller
Ms. MaryEllen Hains
Robert and Sharon Handelsman
Tobi Hanna-Davies
Thomas Harkness
Ellen Harrington and John Stodola
Bob and Joan Hiddema
Sherry L. Higgins
Dr. Charles Gregory Hodgman
Carolyn F. Hornev
Phil Hoskin
Patrick Hudson
Bruce Hutchinson
Craig and Mary Jbara
Valdis and Laila Kalnins
Susan and Robert Kinde
Marilyn Kleb
Robert and Nancy Klesert
Peter Kobrak
Paul and Janet Koestner
Daniel Leep
Brian and Bridget Leppard
John and Betty Lerg
Steven Leuty
Alicia Ann Luft
Jim and Julie Luginbill
Dora L. Mann
Anne May
John and Debbie Mellein
Bettina Meyer
Greg and Patrice Mindock
Alan G. Mueller
Roger and Susan Olson
Sally Padgitt
Mike and Phyllis Petersen
Robert and Mary Jo Poel
Tim and Sally Putney
Kathleen Rabbers
Valerie Reed
Lance R. Richmond
Jim and Julie Richter
Judy Kraft Rowe
Mary Alice and Donald Ryder
Moselle and Steve Schoenfelder
David and Deb Schuette
Beth L. Shirley
George and Harriet Slomp
Deborah Sparbel
Joan G. Stewart
Richard and Olga Stieve
Tom Stolz
Lynwood and Joan Topp
Dale and Emma Turton
Barbara and Joel VanDyken
Alfons and Joan Verwilst
Dr. Kyle Vonk
William Wagner
Weavers and Fiber Artists Inc.
Robert and Rebecca Wilcox
Carole Stevens and Mike Willy
Mark Winkel
Dan & Joan Woodard
Diane D. Worden
Ben Yost

### Spotted Turtle ($100+)

Judy Mayo and Sid Aaron
Nancy Acker
William H. Baker
Phyllis J. Barents
Alan Baudler
David K. Baute
Susan R. Benner
Gilbert Bowman
William and Victoria Brander
William C. and Leslie Buhl
Dennis and Janice Burke
Nick and Kathy Carter
Marcus Clark and Lorrie Elliott
Nina L Consolatti
Pamela R. Dewey
Bill and Mary Lee Dimond
Marilyn Doolittle
David Dvorak and Karol Peterson
Ed and Karen Dzialowski
Richard and Sandra Edwards
Trey and Becky Eldridge
Roland and Lisa Emanuel
Molly Fairbanks and Richard Pulaski

Ms. Rebekah L Fatzinger
Dr. Joshua David Fisher
Karl and Gloria Frankena
Artis Freye and Kevin Ulrich
Matthew and Tomomi Geisler
Paul and Janet Gilbert
Edith Gilmore
John and Diana Goes
Jim and Carol Gonzalez
Katherine Gross and Gary Mittelbach
Alice and Dick Haight
Dean and Cynthia Halderson
Stephen Hamilton
Ladislav J. Hanka
Donald and Ronnee Harrell
Erin Heskett
Sarah Jordan and Patricia Lutsky
John and Mary Kittredge
Kevin Kline
Karen E. Knapp
Margaret Kohring
Kenneth M. Kornheiser
Bob and Margaret Laatsch
Gail Lauzzana
Keith and Julie Lewandowski
George and Linda Macleod
Paul and Gail MacNellis
David Jackson
Bill and Karen McNulty
Denny and Eileen Mead
James and Amy Melvin
David Sheldon
Sally Mittler
Christopher Nagy and Shannon Thornton
George M. Nielsen
Catherine Niessink
Dr. Mark A Noffsinger
Diane E. Ogasian
Joel and Florence Orosz
Louis J. Pepoy
Greg Petty
Lori and Floyd Phalen
Max Rappaport
Eric and Martha Reid
Patsy Richardson
R. A. Rifenberg
Thomas Riker
Chuck and Lou Ritter
Michael and Judy Salada
David and Janet Scarrow
Randall and Joyce Schau
Robert and Georgette Schirmer
Lawrence J. Sehy
Thomas H. Seiler
Cybelle Shattuck
Louise Silberman and Chris Galle
Glenn and Sylvia Sperry
Jane Steward
Margie and Ed Stinson
Michael Stoline
Richard and Mary Sutton
Roger Taylor
Jane Ter Louw
John and Betty Tilton
James H. Timmons
Nick and Nancy Tuit
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## Cerulean Warbler ($250+)

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Alex and Kathy Bozymowski
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Tamara Crupi
Alica N. Cummings
Michele Cudahy and Dave DeBack
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George Dunn
Bruce and Martha Edger
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Helen Elkiss
Randal K. and Maria J. Romero Eshuis
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Jack O. Haeger
Linda and Charles M. Hall
Jennifer and Matt Haywood
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Cynthia Hingtgen
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Carol and Greg Josefowicz
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John and Connie McKeague
Dennis Miczulski
Franklin and Paula Presler
Heather and Jim Ratliff
Beth A. Schluckbier
Jennifer Schwab and Tom Miller
Thomas J. Smith
Thomas Thornburg
Mr. Tim Winslow

## Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake ($500+)

Dana Buoscio and John Szewezyk
Kristi and Stephen Chapman
John R. and Barbara A. Chenault
Roark Consolatti
Donald Cummings
Susan M. Dennis, D.D.S.
Christopher M. Flynn
Barbara and John Guinness
Matthew Kuiper
Helen McCauslin
Russell and Connie McFee
Fred and Teresa Morris
Wayne and Karen Moss
Jeffrey and Emily Pearson
Ralph Pernice and Nancy Englander
Kathy Pullano
George and Louise Robeck
Craig L. Shumaker
Roger and Jeanne Turner
C. Glen Walter
Rachel L. Woodard
Richard and Julie Wyrwa
Laurie Young

## Mitchell's Satyr ($1000+)

Rebecca Brock
John and Shannon Floyd
Dave Foerster and Sheila Birdsall
Dr. Sandra E. Nordmark
Samuel Qualls and Adriana Pardave Meija
Dennis and Patricia Stelzer
Robert Swaney and Mary Stephenson-Swaney

**And thank you to all our members who wish their contributions to remain anonymous!**

## Blue Green Society Renewals

Frank D. Ballo
Charles and Jan Benner
Peter Boerma
Sharon C. Boudeman
Sherwood and Sharon Boudeman
George and Pat Burgoyne
Larry and Barbara Case
Thomas Coder
Kalman and Becky Csia
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Pamela and Arno Yurk

**And sincere thanks to our Blue Green Society members who wish to remain anonymous. We appreciate you!**

## Gift Memberships were given to:

Mr. and Mrs. Thom Davenport
Mr. and Mrs. Russ Sandefur
**by Anonymous**

Chris and Shannon Stafford
Margie Slocum
Wayne and Julie Rose
**by Larry and Barbara Case**

Rebecca Bigelow
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Julie Leavitt
**by Dave and Janice Varney**

Sue Stejskal and Andy Rosenbaum
Terry Hluchyj and Richard Roosenberg
**by Gail Walter and Tom Nehil**

## Donations were made in honor of:

Jennifer Dentler, *"This gift is being made in honor of Jennifer Dentler's 40th birthday from the Atwaters, Eldreds, and Livingstons."*
**by Mrs. Candice Lynn Atwater**

Woody Boudeman *"for the holidays."*
**by Bud and Judi Baldwin**

The wedding of Dick Shaw and Shirley Sutton
**by Jim and Patti Birkes**

Mary Houser
**by Chapter EZ of PEO Sisterhood**

Justin Davies, *"Who loves the natural beauty of Michigan."*
**by Tobi Hanna-Davies**

Charlotte Mittler and the Mittler family
**Kay and Bill Hokanson**

Charlotte Mittler, *"In honor of my Aunt and SWMLC supporter, Charlotte Mittler."*
**by Katya Hokanson**

Nancy and Dave Clark
**by Rick and Mary Hoffman**

Emily Wilke and Mitch Lettow, *"For speaking as part of a series of classes for the 'conservation stewards' course, offered in partnership with MSU and KNC."*
**by Kalamazoo Nature Center**

Don J. Sayan
The marriage of Dick and Shirley Shaw
**by Nanette and Jack Keiser**

In honor of Paul Kline's 90th birthday
**by Kevin Kline**

Catherine Henze and Chris Larsen
**by Nicky Leigh**

Wendell and Juanita Ball, *"This gift is in honor of my parents, Wendell and Juanita Ball, original owners of Eureka, near Paw Paw."*
**by Martin and Wendy McCormick**

Kay and Bill Hokanson
**by Charlotte G. Mittler**

Charlotte and Tom Mittler
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**by Bruce and Jean Williams**

Travis and Sarah Simmons
**by Bruce and Jean Williams**

Nate and Erin Fuller
**by Dan and Joan Woodard**

## Memorial Contributions

The following gifts were made in memory or remembrance of:

John W. Aronson
**by Rebecca J. Shank**

Larry Jensen
**by Larry and Noel Hayward**

Barb Kinsey
**by Paul D. Olexia**

LJS Westnedge. R.I.P.
**by Geoffrey and Sarah Cripe**

Bessie Mueller
Bessie Woolner
**by Alan G. Mueller**

Ron Phillips
**by Rebecca J. Shank**

Dale Van Antwerp by:
**Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph**
**Roger Drummond**
**Ann and Gary Fergemann**
**Jim and Lynne Hinga**
**John and Margaret Hopkins**
**Robert S. Hunt**
**Sharon Mensch**
**Denny and Karen Monroe**
**Fred and JoDee Nelson**
**Powell family: Kathy and Calvin, Jonah, and Carrie**
**Tom Rush**
**Michael and Judy Salada**
**Richard and Carol Van Antwerp**
**Nancy Strong and Tom Vemich**

## Group/Club/Business Supporters

Approved Protection Systems
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Pfizer Foundation Annual Giving Campaign
Pfizer Foundation Matching Gift Program
Pfizer Foundation Volunteer Program

## In-Kind Donations

### We would like to thank:

**Dan Bayless and Steve Murk of Murk Management for**
Donation of fried chicken from Village Market for the Black River Preserve Grand Opening Event in South Haven, 10/15/2016.

**Charles and Mary Moore for**
Donating lumber and associated materials over the course of 2016 for boardwalk construction at Black River preserve.

**Jesse Rose and Jaspare's Pizza of Gull Road, Kalamazoo, for**
Donation of pizza for our annual Volunteer Recognition Event, 1/12/2017.

**James Timmons for**
Donating a stump injector and approximately 2500 doses of glyphosate.

### Join the Wednesday Warriors in their 2017 season of weekly mayhem and conservation service!

Anyone is welcome to pitch in to help keep our preserves up to snuff. It's a great way to experience the preserves with the folks who know them best, plus get acquainted with other active people who share the conservation spirit. There are no long-term commitments, fees, strengths, or special skills required — just a willing attitude and a pair of work gloves.

**Check our website weekly for dates and destinations.**

## Did you know that you could potentially **DOUBLE** your gift to SWMLC?

Contributions to Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy are **matched** by many corporations. If you are employed by (or retired from) a company that has a matching program, please let us know! Send your company form with your gift and we'll be sure to follow-up.

Any questions? Email Nicole at nmspeedy@swmlc.org or call 269-324-1600 x307.

## What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. Shopping at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization (SWMLC, of course!). You use the same account on both Amazon.com and AmazonSmile, plus your shopping cart, Wish List, registries, and other account settings are also the same. Once you have selected SWMLC as your designated organization, AmazonSmile will remember and every eligible purchase that you make will result in a donation to us! Quarterly, we will receive notification and an automatic deposit from Amazon into our Program Fund.

## Public input needed

In 2012, SWMLC was successfully accredited by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission, demonstrating that our policies and programs meet the standards and practices established by the Land Trust Alliance to ensure land trusts' ability to protect important natural places and working lands forever.

SWMLC is pleased to announce that, after five years, we are applying for renewal of our Accredited status. As part of the process, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, invites public input and accepts signed, written comments pending our application in early June.

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org or email your comment to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may be mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments, 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866; or faxed to 518-587-3183. **Comments on SWMLC's application will be most useful by June 6, 2017.**

# Black River Preserve
## U P D A T E

Donors Todd and Amy Sanford in front of the new trailhead.

Phase 1 of the Entergy-funded stream and trail project at Black River Preserve has wrapped up, marking a major hurdle in our efforts to create an accessible and ecologically mindful trail system for the community to enjoy. A new culvert pipe was installed on the Mainstem Trail, and volunteers restored the floodplain habitat: broadcasting native seed, covering exposed soil with erosion control fabric, and planting native shrubs. The preserve's southern end is now much easier to access (attention, birders!). The capstone of the trail project was the unveiling last September of the interpretive kiosks at the new Jane Sanford Memorial Trailhead, which was funded by the families of Todd and Kurt Sanford. Watch for more work at Black River this summer, as Phase 2 of the project will address two additional culverts that are in need of attention as part of the stream restoration process.

Nate Fuller

## We have a new website!

The look is new but the address is still the same:

**www.swmlc.org**

And it now works well on any device!

Please check it out . . . and please keep checking back as we continue to grow and enrich it!

# SWMLC Stewardship Wish List

We love sharing our stewardship successes. Our community workdays, wildflowers popping up after a prescribed burn, and wildlife returning after habitat restoration is what reminds us why we do the work that we do.

Something far less compelling that we don't often talk about are the costs and wear and tear of our stewardship equipment. From safety glasses to our Silverado, stewardship gear takes a beating! A single season of surveying, events, workdays, and a diligent stewardship crew managing our preserves puts more than 16,000 miles on our truck.

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy is dedicated to using your precious dollars as efficiently and effectively as possible to ensure that we are maximizing their benefit to land conservation in southwest Michigan. As such, we try to use recycled, donated, or second-hand items as much as we can — it's a good thing, not only for saving money, but for the environment as well.

If you are interested in making a tax-deductible donation of a working truck or other vehicle with some life left in it to help replace our aging fleet of "work wagons," email Mitch (lettow@swmlc.org). For the full set of equipment needs, see the "stewardship wish list" at www.swmlc.org/wish-list.

*Thank you!*

**HOP! is a new program that encourages kids to get fit while having fun outdoors. Begins June 10.**

## How does it work?

### Get a walking stick
Available for $5 each at Bookbug and the SWMLC office.

### Take a hike!
Explore the trails at **EACH** of seven of our most popular preserves.

### Send us a selfie from the preserve.
Show everyone what a great time you've had by taking a photo at the end of your hike and uploading it to Instagram using the hashtag "swmlc-hop". Or just email it to us at conserveland@swmlc.org.

### Get a medallion.
We will send you a special medallion to put on your walking stick for each preserve that you finish.

### Get a giftcard.
Walk the trails at all seven of these preserves and you will receive a $15 giftcard to Bookbug!

### Get fit while having fun outdoors!
And now that you know the trails, share them with your friends!

# HIKE OUR PRESERVES!

**details at www.swmlc.org/hop**

**Don't miss the HOP! Kickoff at Wolf Tree Nature Trails! • Saturday, June 10, 4:30 pm**

Brought to you by **SWMLC** in partnership with **Bookbug** & local health practitioners.

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## A word from the President • Peter D. Ter Louw, SWMLC President & Executive Director

We are thrilled to announce that in early January, SWMLC completed the purchase of the ecologically exceptional 188-acre Portman Nature Preserve in eastern Van Buren County.With your help, we have finally conserved this spectacular property, which contains parts of three lakes, seven different habitat types, and an incredible diversity of species, including numerous rare and threatened plants and animals, as well as the federally-endangered Mitchell's satyr butterfly.

Although the property is now technically a SWMLC preserve, we still need to raise the final $75,000 necessary to create safe public access to the property so that we can share it with all of you. We are currently working to construct a parking lot by mid-May, with a trailhead and trail design to follow.

In addition, this last bit of funds will also help support long-term stewardship of the property. Our stewardship staff and partners have begun to remove invasive species on the site and conduct habitat management work, which is making a big difference!

Separately, we've initiated a collaboration with Mattawan Schools in which several classrooms are visiting the Portman Nature Preserve to learn in a natural environment. We hope that this program will grow over time, and we look forward to introducing many generations of local kids to this beautiful nature preserve.

Our deepest thanks go out to all of you who have supported this $2.2 million project to create the Portman Nature Preserve. We are almost there! And for anyone who hasn't had the chance to contribute, please consider a gift to help us complete the public access infrastructure necessary to make Portman a public nature preserve. If we are successful in raising the final $75,000, we will hold a Grand Opening for the Portman Nature Preserve this fall.

In the meantime, **please join us on Saturday May 20th for a Sneak Peak of the preserve!** We will have a morning bird walk, as well as self-guided tours of the preserve with several learning stations located around the preserve. We would love to see you there! Please also keep an eye out for volunteer opportunities later this spring!

# First Classroom Visits Portman Nature Preserve

## "It's hard to go back inside...everything seems so square and un-nature-y."

Peter D. Ter Louw

In late March, Mrs. Van Engen's class of Mattawan fourth-graders were the very first group of kids to visit the preserve. As part of a "First Impressions" project, each child marked a 5' x 5' area that they will visit two more times this spring, watching and recording how the spot changes over time. There was a never-ending buzz of activity despite a fine drizzle and the muddy ground. Back in the classroom, Mrs. Van Engen overheard some of the kids talking and shared some quotes with us:

*"I wish we could have spent the whole day there!"*

*"Can we go back every WEEK? It would be SOOOOO good for our brains! I bet we could find research that proves it!"*

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy has acquired the Portman Property with funding made available as mitigation for habitat loss or forest fragmentation caused by the construction and maintenance of the Enbridge Energy, Limited Partnership, 6B Pipeline. The Conservation Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have partnered to manage these voluntary mitigation funds and provide grants to implement local conservation measures in Indiana and Michigan to protect and restore critical habitat for migratory birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Additional funding was provided by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service through the Community Forest Program and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Grant. The purpose of the Awards is to provide funding to acquire the Property for the conservation of critical wildlife habitat and to effect the U.S. Forest Service Community Forest Program authorized by Section 8003 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (16 U.S.C. 2103d) for the purposes of establishing community forests that provide community benefits by acquiring and protecting private forestlands.

## Pilgrim Haven Natural Area

# Update

SWMLC has entered into a lease agreement with the South Haven Area Recreation Authority (SHARA) to manage improvements and conduct maintenance of Pilgrim Haven Natural Area. This past fall, we began the first phase by constructing barrier-free access to the beach and parking area to help support community use.

With the recent rise in lake levels significantly altering the Lake Michigan shoreline and damaging structures near the water, we were forced to rethink the original plan for a wooden access ramp over the dune and down to the beach. Based on MDEQ Coastal Zone Management recommendations and guidance by the engineering consultant, the SWMLC-SHARA partnership decided to utilize the existing pathway to the beach adjacent to 18th Street. Once completed the dune will be restored and replanted with native grasses to increase erosion resistance and restore the native habitat.

In early January, we were excited to learn that SHARA was awarded a second Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund matching grant for additional improvements necessary to safely open Pilgrim Haven. We expect to undertake additional fundraising to support these project needs, but we are excited and pleased with all that has been accomplished so far.

Peter Ter Louw

## coming soon . . .

# PORTMAN'S LEGACY WHITE WINE

### Created specially for SWMLC by Cody Kresta Vineyard & Winery

**All proceeds go to support the creation and care of the Portman Nature Preserve.**

*Thank you David & Mary Lou, owners of Cody Kresta!*

Portman's Legacy will be available at select SWMLC events and from Cody Kresta's Tasting Room, 45727 27th Street, Mattawan (www.codykrestawinery.com), located right around the corner from Portman Nature Preserve.
Call the SWMLC office at 269-324-1600 or check www.swmlc.org for more information.

Prefer to go paperless? Let us know!

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy
8395 East Main St.
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*Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation that conserves ecologically important and scenic landscapes that give our region its natural character — now and for generations to come.*

*Federal EIN 38-3038708. MICS 10463*

*For more information, please contact:*
*SWMLC, 8395 East Main St., Galesburg, MI 49053*
*269-324-1600 • Conserveland@swmlc.org • www.swmlc.org*

All programs and services are provided on a nondiscriminatory basis.

*You're invited!*

Our first opportunity to share this new and significant natural area with the public is coming up soon . . .

# Portman Nature Preserve Sneak Peek!

## Saturday, May 20
## 10 am - 3 pm
### Guided Bird Walk at 9 am

(Please RSVP for Bird Walk by emailing conserveland@swmlc.org or calling 269-324-1600)

Nate Fuller

**Portman Nature Preserve . . .**
**for community, for families, for wildlife,**
**forever.**