SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN LAND CONSERVANCY

Protecting Nature

improving habitat • ensuring water quality • supporting biodiversity
connecting people and nature • helping families conserve the land they love

Summer 2020 – Vol. 29, No. 2

Includes 2019 Annual Report & Highlights

SWMLC was recently awarded $20,000 through The Cornell Labs Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative grant to monitor grassland bird populations and assess the results of our restoration work.

Read the full story on page 12.

Henslow's Sparrow at Hidden Pond Preserve.
Photo by Delmar Bachert

If we, the people of southwest Michigan, don't protect our land and water – *who will?*

Nature is Essential

Peter Ter Louw, President and Executive Director

Our year began with energy and excitement. Thanks to the generosity of donors, we were well on our way to protecting Porter Legacy Dunes, work on barrier-free access into the wetland at Bow in the Clouds Preserve was about to begin, and completion of a new Resiliency Conservation Plan was in sight.

Then COVID-19 hit and turned everything upside down.

In response to state executive orders and in an effort to keep everyone safe, we closed the office and staff worked from home. We canceled our public events, field trips, volunteer workdays, and early spring easement monitoring. Things were very different. But I'm incredibly proud of how ready and willing the SWMLC staff were to find creative and safe ways to continue the bulk of our important work. We would not be where we are today without our staff's unwavering dedication to SWMLC's mission. Our hearts go out to those who have been less fortunate.

The pandemic has brought hardship and pain to many, but it has also revealed some unforeseen benefits. One has been seeing people turn to nature for peace and balance. Throughout the spring and summer, SWMLC's public preserves have remained open every day for the community to use. New signage encouraged social distancing and, on many days, the parking lots were filled with the cars of visitors who were rediscovering the healing power of nature. The trails took a beating in some places and there was more trash, but all of that is fixable and a small price to pay.

I'm so inspired to see our mission put into action in this way, watching our preserves serve as natural sanctuaries and places of respite during the quarantine. It's been an unexpected silver lining.

Like the seasons, our work moves forward. Though the office will remain closed for the near future, we're close to finishing this year's priority goals – and have some fantastic new conservation projects in the works.

As always, we've been fiscally prudent and remain financially strong. But, like everyone else, we're concerned what the future of our economy holds. We're asking you, our supporters – now more than ever – to help us protect water quality, save habitat, and create more access to nature for everyone. Please consider making a general donation in support of our work and mission, so we can keep our momentum on these critical projects without interruption.

And thank you for standing by us during these challenging times.

Large-Flowered Trillium (Trillium grandiflorum) at Porter Legacy Dunes | Amelia Hansen

For the Love of the Dunes

You can help create a living lakeshore legacy.

Thank you so much to those who made a gift this spring or to our 2019 Year-End Appeal.

Today, we are just $10,000 away from meeting the full $125,000 challenge grant from The Carls Foundation and the J.A. Woollam Foundation, bringing us within $20,000 of our overall $350,000 goal to create Porter Legacy Dunes.

So, if you haven't yet had a chance to donate to this special project, won't you please consider making a gift today?

Every dollar you give will be matched 1-to-1 and will help us to protect and share this spectacular natural area with all of you.

To learn more and to donate today, please visit our webpage: www.swmlc.org/protect-porter-legacy-dunes

While you're there, watch the NEW Porter Legacy Dunes video and see what we're so excited about!

Dutchman's Breeches (Dicentra cucullaria) at Porter Legacy Dunes | Amelia Hansen

YEAR IN REVIEW

2019 CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

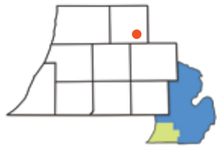
Cindy Mills, Conservation Easement Specialist

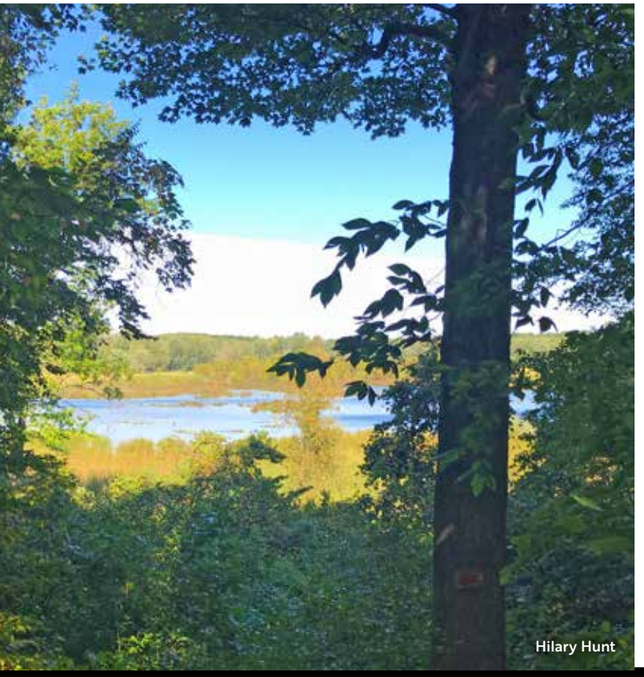
2019 was another solid year with three new conservation easements finalized and several still in the works. The completed easements add up to 400 acres in three of our counties, bringing our total amount of land conserved to 17,094 acres.

Hilary Hunt

Rye CE, Assyria Twp.
Barry County, 80 acres

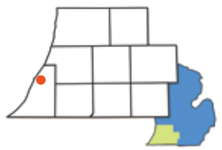
The development rights for this conservation easement were purchased from Rye Eggerstedt with funding from a MDEQ 319 Battle Creek River Watershed grant intended to protect water quality. Located in the Wanadoga Creek sub-watershed, the property has 60 acres of high-quality submergent and emergent wetlands (as identified in the 2015 Kalamazoo River Watershed Land Conservation Plan with some aquatic beds and forested wetlands. There are about 20 upland acres, made up of beech-maple and oak-hickory forest. The easement also includes about 2000 feet of undeveloped frontage along a creek in the watershed.




Hilary Hunt

Sarett CE, BentonTwp.
Berrien County, 164 acres

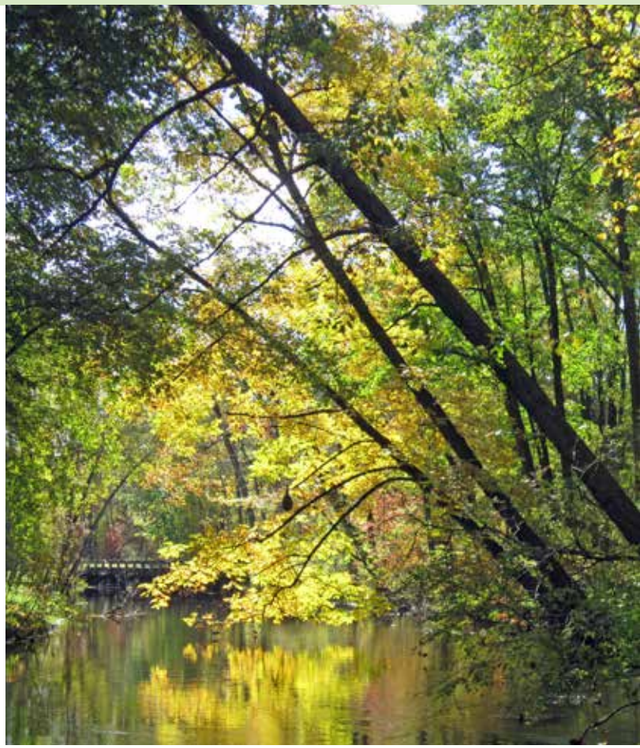
The Sarett Conservation Easement is SWMLC's third easement property owned by Sarett Nature Center and covers 164 wetland acres of their 400-acre main campus. The development rights for the CE were purchased using a USFWS Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Section 6 grant, which awards funds for acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered species – in this case eastern massasauga rattlesnake and Mitchell's satyr butterfly. This easement protects 1.83 miles of frontage on the Paw Paw River as well as 0.6 miles of tributaries. The river itself is a critical natural feature to the region, providing habitat for fish and aquatic invertebrates as well as a place for passive recreation. This un-fragmented stretch of the river also provides a wild area for sensitive species such as prothonotary warblers and red-shouldered hawks.



Jazz CE, Waverly Twp.
Van Buren County, 56 acres

The Jazz Conservation Easement is on property deeded to SWMLC in 2014 and purchased by Kevin and Dawn Lovell in 2019. The Lovells have been enthusiastic and engaged throughout the entire process of drafting the conservation easement. The Jazz CE is located along an undeveloped and ecologically significant stretch of the east branch of the Paw Paw River. The property is approximately half upland deciduous forest and half forested wetland. Over 1,400 linear feet of the river is within the Jazz CE's boundary, and it is located in close proximity to the 342-acre Eureka Conservation Easement, and the 258-acre SWMLC Paw Paw River Preserve.

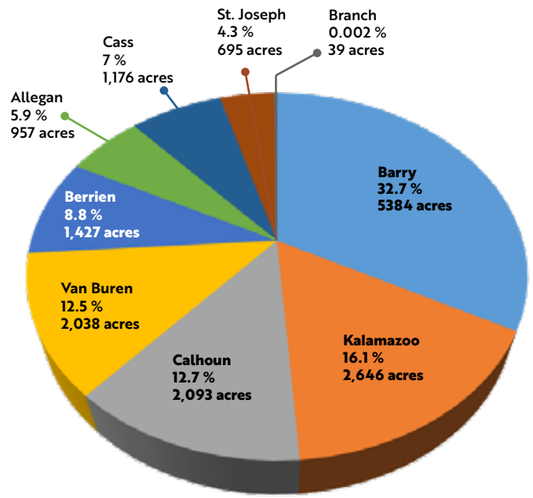
Upland forests range from high quality mature stands with rich understories near the river, to second-growth stands and invasive species-filled understories near the north boundary. The majority of the floodplain forest acreage is very high quality, a natural community that provides habitat for several rare, threatened, and endangered species.



A WARM WELCOME AND THANK YOU TO OUR NEW CONSERVATION EASEMENT LANDOWNERS!

Graph shows acreage protected by county, through 2019

Created by Cindy Mills



Nature Brings Us Back to Earth

C. Miko Dargitz, Development Associate

If you love nature, then the fact that spending time in nature is good for your health is probably something that you know intuitively by the way you feel when you are able to go outside and enjoy being amongst the trees and the plants, and all of the wildlife that thrives in these natural spaces.

And over the past three months as the COVID situation has unfolded, thousands and thousands of people have turned to SWMLC's 50+ preserves for their own comfort, health, and enjoyment. Whether walking solo amongst the sounds of nature, bonding with family over shared outdoor adventures, or meeting up for a socially-distant stroll with a friend, SWMLC preserves have been there. They've offered us a sense of peace, normalcy, and hope at a time when nature was the only place we could turn to for enjoyment outside our own homes.

This positive effect on our mental and emotional well-being is personal for each of us. But studies from around the world confirm that spending time in nature can result in significant reductions in stress, anxiety, depression, obsessive thinking, anger and fear And, studies have found that people who spend time in nature report better moods and a greater sense of well-being. Here is just one among many: www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/enhance-your-wellbeing-nature#.

Behind all of these numbers are real stories of people for whom being in nature has made their lives better . . . allowing them to spend more time with the people they love, giving them a better quality of life, and helping them appreciate all of life's amazing little moments.

Amelia Hansen

"For the past four years I have been battling an aggressive cancer. I made the conscious decision early in my diagnosis to turn to nature as a source of coping and healing. I chose to keep very quiet about my cancer and needed a quiet space to process it all.

As I dedicated so much of my time to walking the SWMLC trails I began to recognize a strong connection between the Earth and my body. The patience of the natural world during our changing Michigan seasons gave me the patience I needed during treatment. I know this might sound crazy, but as the Earth came alive this Spring and I recently completed chemotherapy I started to feel my body slowly come back alive after four years of it feeling so foreign."

— Brandon Bear, elementary school teacher

"The forest and savanna are my personal retreat for comfort and wonder; they never fail to provide some new delight to my senses and take my mind away from . . . all that stuff I don't want to trouble me. As the seasons unfold, different wildflowers flirt for the attention of my eyes for just days or a couple of weeks, then fade quickly only to be replaced by other beauties with their bursts of dazzling colors. The forest and savanna are dazzling: delicate pinks, occasional splashes of red, yellows almost anywhere one looks, a few intriguing whites and purples dot the landscape here and there, purplish blue lupine all too soon replaced by the purplish pink of milkweed and shocking orange of butterfly weed. Fragrant floral scents waft by on the gentle breeze, attracting a cornucopia of bees and butterflies to the abundant blossoms while dragonflies and damselflies dart about. There are many hidden delights waiting to be discovered by the curious. Do get out often and enjoy the beauty and invigorating fresh air!"

— Jeff Fleming, busy volunteer

Mitch Lettow

We extend our deepest gratitude to Brandon and Jeff for sharing their stories and reminding us why we work so hard to conserve these beautiful natural areas and share them with all of you.

Porter Legacy Dunes | Carlos Mejia Lopez

Protecting resilient landscapes and preparing for an uncertain future:

THE 2020 CLIMATE RESILIENCE STRATEGIC CONSERVATION PLAN

Hilary Hunt, Land Protection Specialist and Peter D. Ter Louw, President and Executive Director

Climate Resilience Committee:
Thom Coder, Sharon Gill, Bruce Howe, Hilary Hunt, Mitch Lettow, Earl Werner, TJ Wilkinson

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy's mission is to protect land *forever.* Not for the next twenty-five or fifty years – forever. Natural places that we protect and care for today will outlive us all and we owe it to these lands to do our utmost to safeguard them into a future that we can only imagine.

We also recognize the challenges and our organizational limitations of land conservation in a nine county region that is approximately the size of Yellowstone National Park. To have a ***forever*** impact we have to focus and prioritize where and how we will undertake our work. And now we have added a new criteria and prominent future threat: climate change.

In early 2019, SWMLC staff and board members began updating our region-wide strategic land conservation plan with an additional element, the impact of climate change. SWMLC's previous land conservation plan was completed 12 years ago with an emphasis on our long-standing conservation projects: protecting forested floodplains and wetlands in priority watersheds, expanding existing public and private conservation lands, and protecting critical wildlife habitat for species such as the Mitchell's satyr butterfly.

Using current data and with funding from the Land Trust Alliance's Land and Climate Program and a generous gift from the Guido and Elizabeth Binda Foundation, SWMLC framed the 2020 Plan around saving land that will have the greatest impact and be most resilient to climate change.

What will creating resiliency to climate change need to address in Southwest Michigan?

- Warmer average temperatures, more days above 90 degrees F, resulting in greater stress on native trees and wildlife. [1]
- More frequent large rain events causing erosion[2], with long periods of drought in between. [3]
- Increased fire risk. [4]
- Greater vulnerability and extinction risk for native species.
  - 17% of game species are vulnerable. [5]
  - 61% of Species of Greatest Conservation Need at higher risk. [5]
- Higher threat of invasion from pests and invasive species

[1] Great Lakes Integrated Sciences + Assessments. http://glisa.umich.edu/resources/great-lakes-regional-climate-change-maps
[2] Saunders et al. 2012. http://www.rockymountainclimate.org/reports_3.htm
[3] Liqiang Sun and Ken Kunkel, Cooperative Institute for Climate and Satellites.
[4] Handler et al. 2014. https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/45688
[5] MDNR. http://cdm15867.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15559coll1/id/3583/rec/1
[6] Source: Kellogg Biological Station website.

Photo: Bruce Howe. Tamarack Springs Conservation Easement, owned by Ed and Kathy Knox

How to know which land to protect and how is our work altered by climate change?

We've always protected land that ranked highly for biodiversity, habitat, recreation, accessibility, community relevance, and water quality impact. Now we are adding a new priority to the mix: climate resilience.

To determine which areas of land will be most resilient – and most likely to remain high quality natural systems under the impacts of climate change – we met this past summer with experts from governmental agencies, universities, and nonprofits statewide. From this collective knowledge source, we identified the key conservation biology criteria which also qualify for addressing resilient land:

1. connected to other natural areas (not isolated or fragmented)
2. existing wildlife and plant biodiversity
3. relevance to regional water systems.

Under the broad heading of biodiversity, we also acknowledged that resilient land contains topographic and landform diversity – such as small ravines, hills, or wetlands – which provide microhabitats within a larger habitat.

Finding Resilient Land

With all of these criteria in mind, we contracted the Center for Geographic Change at Western Michigan University to build a computerized spatial representation of the landscape in our service area **(see map on page 11).** The small, colorful hexagons in this map are quarter-mile sections of land ranked by their resilience score. **Clusters of blue and green hexagons are the most resilient places, and frequently coincide with river corridors, State Game Areas, or large landscape features such as the Kalamazoo Glacial Moraine.**

Hubs and Corridors

For a landscape to be truly resilient, there must be large, contiguous tracts of uninterrupted natural land that function as biodiverse reserves, places such as Fort Custer and the Barry, Allegan, and Jones State Game Areas. These places are referred to as "hubs" in the SWMLC 2020 Climate Resilience Strategic Land Conservation Plan and our goal is to continue enlarging them to give wildlife a chance to adapt and evolve over time. **Hubs are identified and outlined in white on the map.**

However, wildlife need to be able to move across the landscape to connect with others of their species and to migrate if conditions become unfavorable. So we are also focused on protecting corridors, "strips of undeveloped land that link isolated habitats"[6]. The Lake Michigan lakeshore is a perfect example of a very long corridor that includes a lot of protected land. Although it may not be as wide or expansive as the State Game Areas, it allows populations to disperse from one hub to another in a northerly direction to escape negative climate change impacts. **Corridors appear as long, thin strips of green and blue on the map.**

Using the 2020 Plan

Over the next few decades with periodic review and adjustments, SWMLC's Board and staff will reference this map and the accompanying plan to guide our new land acquisitions, prioritizing land located in hubs and corridors to maximize conservation benefit. Although thinking through this resilience lens helps focus our work, we also acknowledge our imperfect understanding of these complex natural communities. Robin Wall Kimmerer, mother, scientist, professor, and Potawatomi Nation citizen says it best:

"We say that humans have the least experience with how to live and thus the most to learn – we must look to our teachers among the other species for guidance. Their wisdom is apparent in the way that they live. They teach us by example. They've been on the earth far longer than we have been, and have had time to figure things out."

THE 2020 CLIMATE RESILIENCE STRATEGIC CONSERVATION PLAN *continued*

Hubs and Corridors

A series of corridors throughout southwest Michigan are only as good as the biodiversity hubs that they connect. The following 8 connecting corridors and 7 hubs have been identified as key areas of focus.

1. Black River Headwaters Corridor

(COUNTIES: KALAMAZOO, VAN BUREN, ALLEGAN)
17 miles, 258 acres currently protected within corridor
INCLUDES: SWMLC's Jeptha Lake Fen and Hultmark preserves; one SWMLC CE; Kal-Haven Trail; one preserve protected by another organization
MAIN BARRIERS: Residential development surrounds lakes

Connected Hubs:

Paw Paw River Headwaters Area, currently protects 1,991 acres
RARE SPECIES: 25 animals, 19 plants, 1 natural community (fen)

Allegan State Game Area, 50,590 acres currently protected;
RARE SPECIES: 35 animals, 60 plants, 7 identified natural communities
INCLUDES: SWMLC's Dayton-Willard, Hultmark, Jeptha Lake Fen, Portman, Paw Paw River, and Sora Meadows Preserves; 6 SWMLC CE's; Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery; Kal-Haven Trail; and 7 areas protected by other organizations

2. Kalamazoo Moraine Corridor

(COUNTIES: KALAMAZOO, VAN BUREN, BARRY)
19 miles, 175 acres currently protected within corridor
INCLUDES: SWMLC's Sand Creek Preserve; Kal-Haven Trail
MAIN BARRIERS: US-131, City of Plainwell, agriculture

Connected Hubs:

Paw Paw River Headwater Area (DESCRIBED ABOVE)

Barry State Game Area, currently protects 22,305 acres
RARE SPECIES: 34 animals, 15 plants, 50+ species of greatest conservation need, 45 identified natural communities
INCLUDES: SWMLC's Hidden Pond and Heath Road preserves; SWMLC CE's (479 acres); Yankee Springs Recreation Area; 2 areas protected by other organizations; and one US Fish & Wildlife site

3. Thornapple Corridor

(BARRY COUNTY)
3 miles, 158 acres currently protected within corridor
INCLUDES: one SWMLC CE
MAIN BARRIERS: M-37, Village of Middleville, residential development, agriculture

Connected Hubs:

Barry State Game Area (DESCRIBED ABOVE)

Middleville State Game Area, currently protects 4,500 acres
RARE SPECIES: 8 animals, 4 plants, 20+ wildlife species of greatest conservation need, 7 identified natural communities
INCLUDES: a portion of the North Country Trail; semi-connected areas of public land managed by the DNR

4. Augusta Creek Corridor

(COUNTIES: KALAMAZOO, BARRY)
17 miles, 4,255 acres currently protected within corridor
INCLUDES: SWMLC's Fair Lake Preserve; 7 SWMLC CE's; MSU's Kellogg Forest and Biological Station; Augusta Creek Fish and Wildlife Area
MAIN BARRIERS: Amtrak line, M-96, M-89, Village of Augusta, agriculture

Connected Hubs:

Barry State Game Area (DESCRIBED ABOVE)

Fort Custer, currently protects 10,823 acres
RARE SPECIES: 25 animals, 24 plants, 15+ species of greatest conservation need, 8 identified natural communities
INCLUDES: SWMLC's Robert and Rosalie Emmons Augusta Floodplain Forest Preserve; Fort Custer Training Center and Recreation Area

5. Kalamazoo Interlobate Corridor

(COUNTIES: CALHOUN, BARRY)
24 miles, 1,782 acres currently protected within corridor
INCLUDES: SWMLC's Fair Lake Preserve; 5 SWMLC CE's; Pierce Cedar Creek Inst.; Battle Creek Outdoor Education Center; and one area protected by another organization
MAIN BARRIERS: M-66, M-37, M-43, agriculture

Connected Hubs:

Barry State Game Area (DESCRIBED ABOVE)

Big Marsh, currently protects 2,161 acres
RARE SPECIES: 25 animals, 19 plants, 12+ species of greatest conservation need, 1 identified natural community (prairie fen)
INCLUDES: several SWMLC CE's; 2 areas protected by another organization

6. Cassopolis Ice Contact Ridge Corridor

(COUNTIES: KALAMAZOO, VAN BUREN, CASS)
24 miles, 425 acres currently protected within corridor
INCLUDES: SWMLC's Tamarack Swamp Preserve, Michigan Nature Association's Bankson Lake Bog
MAIN BARRIERS: M-40, major railroad, agriculture

Connected Hubs:

Paw Paw River Headwater Area (DESCRIBED ABOVE)

Jones Conservation Area, currently protects 7,707 acres
RARE SPECIES: 25 animals, 10 plants, 25 identified natural communities
INCLUDES: SWMLC's Spirit Springs Sanctuary and Tamarack Preserve; 2 SWMLC CE's; Dr. T.K. Lawless County Park; and one DNR protected area

7. Conservation Gateway Corridor

(CASS COUNTY)
11 miles, 925 acres currently protected within corridor
INCLUDES: 4 SWMLC CE's; Dr. T.K. Lawless County Park
MAIN BARRIERS: M-60, US-12, lakeside residential development

Connected Hubs:

Jones Conservation Area (DESCRIBED ABOVE)

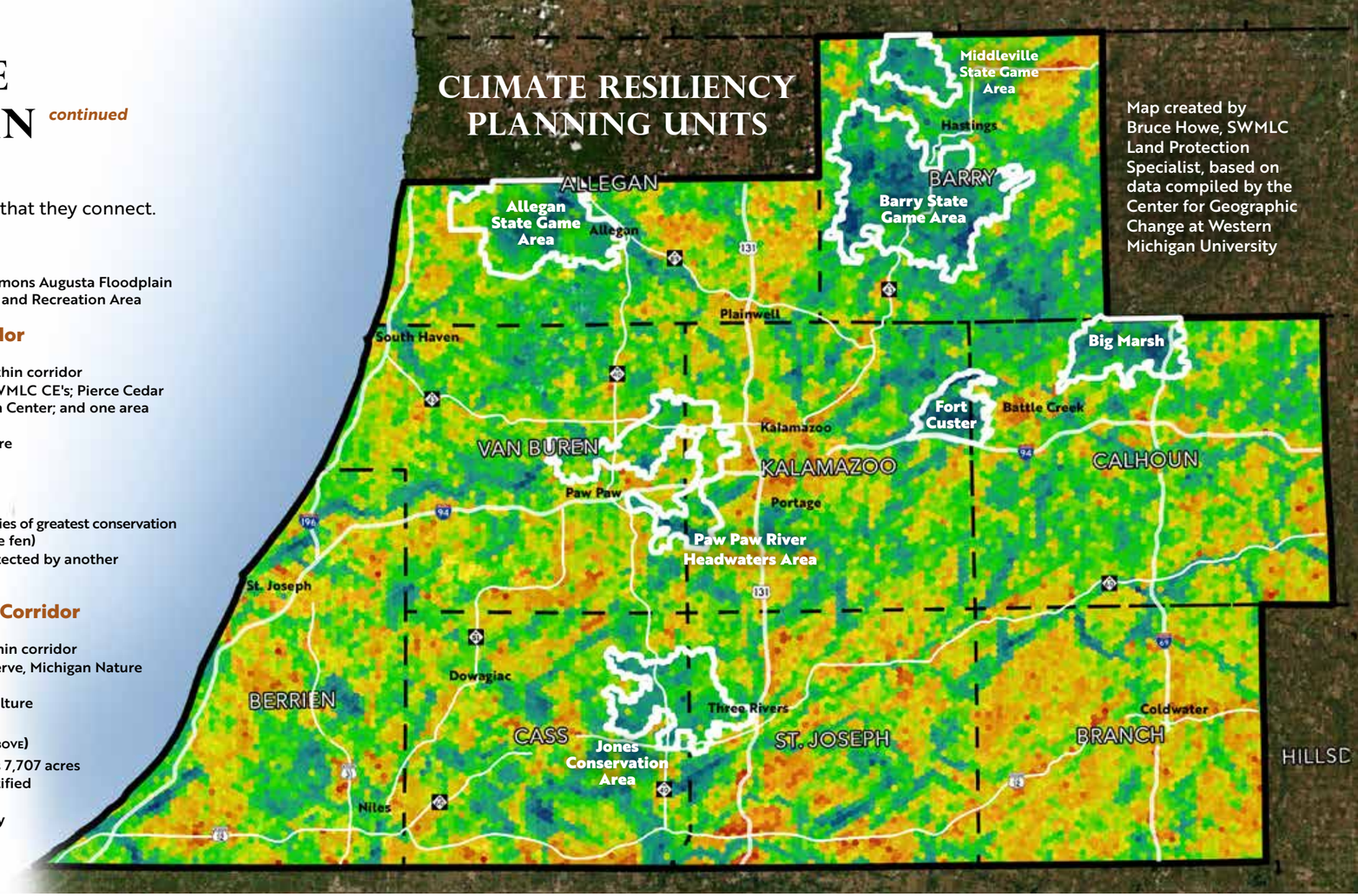
Michigan/Indiana State Line
INCLUDES: St. Joseph River; 130-acre natural area (Pipewort Pond) managed by Indiana DNR

8. Lakeshore Corridor

(COUNTIES: BERRIEN, VAN BUREN, ALLEGAN)
64 miles, 7,723 acres currently protected within corridor
MAIN BARRIERS: Residential development; Cities of New Buffalo, St. Joseph, Benton Harbor, South Haven; 4 interstate and Michigan highways

Series of Connected Hubs

INCLUDES: SWMLC's Kesling, Hickory Creek, Dunes Parkway, Pilgrim Haven Natural Area, Wau-Ke-Na Wm. Erby Smith Preserves; 6 SWMLC CE's; 4 county parks; 11 city/township parks; 9 natural areas protected by other organizations; and 4 state parks or natural areas protected by the DNR.



MAP LEGEND

VALUE
543 HIGHER QUALITY
31 HIGHER QUALITY
Biodiversity Hub
County Line
SWMLC Service Area

Learn more about hubs, corridors, and their impact on natural communities!

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN LAND CONSERVANCY'S

VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23 • 6:30 - 7:30 PM

Featuring Guest Speaker: Dr. Lars Brudvig: *Reconnecting Fragmented Landscapes for Biodiversity*

Please join us for a lively presentation and Q&A with Dr. Lars Brudvig, MSU researcher and founder of the Brudvig Lab, who will discuss his work researching corridors and how this concept informs SWMLC's new Climate Resiliency Plan.

Due to COVID-19 and the State ExecutiveOrder against large gatherings, this year's Annual Members' Meeting will be conducted over Zoom, a great way for groups to meet online that's easy to use and requires no special equipment.

***"Virtual"? How does that work?* Just send an email to conserveland@swmlc.org by 12 pm on the day of the meeting and we will send you an access code and simple instructions.**

Endless Summer Soundtracks

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy was recently awarded $20,000 through The Cornell Labs Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative grant so that we can monitor grassland bird populations and assess the results of our restoration work

Amelia Hansen, Communication Specialist and C. Miko Dargitz, Development Associate, with Mitch Lettow, Stewardship Director

As a little kid in the early 1970's, I remember hearing the sweet, almost sad whistle of Eastern meadowlarks any time I ventured into the fields at the edge of our housing development. I didn't know what kind of bird made the song but it became my childhood's familiar summer soundtrack.

As a slightly older "bird nerd," I was delighted to see bobolinks in the tall grass at the back of Arcadia Elementary school's playground (of course, I didn't tell my friends about seeing the bird with the silly name!).

But the 40+ years since then have not been kind to North American birds. A recent study in the journal *Science* found that 1 out of every 4 birds species has been lost since 1970 (nearly 3 billion birds), and grassland birds like meadowlarks, bobolinks, dickcissels, Eastern kingbirds, and certain sparrows have been hit especially hard due to habitat loss, fragmentation, and changing farm practices. According to the 2015 North American Breeding Bird Survey, bobolink populations have declined by 65% over the last 50 years!

Henslow's Sparrow (Ammodramus henslowii), a State Endangered species in Michigan, perched on wire cage installed to protect recently-planted oak saplings, part of savanna habitat restoration work going on at Hidden Pond Preserve in Barry County, MI.

Photo, Delmar Bachert

Bobolink (Dolichonyx oryzivorus)
Wau-Ke-Na, William Erby Smith Preserve, South Tract
Photo, Nate Fuller

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy actively manages over 4,000 acres of nature preserves for ecological health, and stewarding and restoring high quality breeding habitat for grassland and savanna birds is one of our priorities. Since 2003, we have converted nearly 300 acres of former unproductive farmland to productive grassland bird habitat. Understanding bird populations throughout restoration projects like these are crucial to interpreting their impact but, as a small non-profit organization, SWMLC has not always had the resources to study that impact.

That's why we're especially grateful to have been awarded $20,000 through The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative to include bird monitoring alongside grassland and savanna habitat restoration work through spring of 2021.

Working with field ornithologists Joanna Sblendorio and Michael Dreibelbis through Sharon Gill's lab at Western Michigan University, we will carry out bird surveys and develop monitoring protocols on over 700 acres of protected SWMLC lands. We are also excited about working toward long-term monitoring capacity for birds with local volunteer birders using the "eBird" app. The grant will allow us to conduct complementary grassland and savanna habitat management on 236 acres using prescribed burns, invasive species removal, and canopy thinning.

"By establishing a series of bird surveys, not only do we understand more about bird habitat use at each preserve, but we create historic baselines that we can build on over time and compare with future surveys," stated Mitch Lettow, SWMLC Stewardship Director. "This grant from The Cornell Lab's Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative will enable us, for the first time, to incorporate bird monitoring at important grassland and savanna sites to help us make sure our restorations are on target and we're doing the most we can for the birds we all care about."

Joanna and Michael have already made some quality finds this spring and summer, including state-endangered Henslow's sparrows at Hidden Pond Preserve in Barry County, bobolinks at Wau-Ke-Na William Erby Smith Preserve's South Tract, and yellow-breasted chats at both of these preserves – including a family group!

Today's generation of kids may not hear the plaintive call of the Eastern meadowlark from their backyard, or watch the wacky antics of bobolinks from their schoolyard at recess. However, we truly believe that with thoughtful stewardship, generations of nature lovers can always enjoy the sanctuary of our nature preserves and experience the jaw-dropping calls of the bobolink – and learn its "silly name" too.

For information about some of SWMLC's past prairie and savanna habitat restoration work, read "Sanctioned by Sparrows" in ***Protecting Nature***, Vol. 28, No. 2.

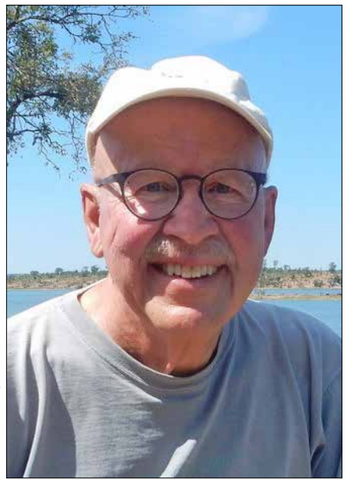


Photo courtesy of James Motiff

Putting Values into Action

James Motiff

I've just returned from a walk at nearby Wau-Ke-Na, William Erby Smith Preserve (South) and feel very grateful to Mr. Smith for having donated it to Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. What a gift he made. The preserve is a sanctuary of peace for those souls looking to experience nature, its animals, birds, vegetation, fresh air, great smells, and natural sounds. There is ample evidence that preserves like this are not only good for our physical health, but also emotional and spiritual health. Open, accepting environments like Wau-Ke-Na remind us that we are whole persons who must nourish our mind, body, emotions, and spirit.

I believe that a balanced life is a requirement for a good life – and that nourishing body, mind, emotion, and spirit are crucial for carrying out life's purpose. I strongly believe that interacting with nature enables us to achieve that nourishment and balance. These are my values, and it is our values that determine our motivation which, in turn, leads to our actions. Wau-Ke-Na gives me the opportunity to put my values into motivated action: I love to walk, then "walk the talk" by sharing my thoughts with you.

When asked why I have put the preserve in my will, the answer is "my values." I value the work of Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. I value preserving and protecting nature. I value public preserves for the health and enjoyment they bring to people. And I value that the preserve will influence the values, motivation, and actions of others in the future.

I feel satisfied knowing that this place and others like it will be here in both the immediate and distant future, and that people in the future will enjoy and benefit from these natural spaces, just as I do now. I want to "give back" to the community and am motivated to put my values into action by supporting SWMLC's continued work through planned gifts written into my will and trust.

When asked why I have put the preserve in my will, the answer is "my values." I value the work of Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. I value preserving and protecting nature. I value public preserves for the health and enjoyment they bring to people. And I value that the preserve will influence the values, motivation, and actions of others in the future.

James P. Motiff, PhD, is a practicing psychologist and Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Hope College. He is Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Chamber Music Festival of Saugatuck and lives in Glenn, Michigan.

Blue Vervain, *Verbena hastata*
Wau-Ke-Na, William Erby Smith Preserve, South Tract
Amelia Hansen

Pilgrim Haven Natural Area | Courtesy of the Eyvaz Family

Show Your Love

by giving the gift of nature as part of your estate plan

Join James Moffit and the growing number of other people who are ensuring the future of clean water and high quality habitat in southwest Michigan. They share the peace of knowing that their passion for nature will live on, improving the lives of many generations of people and wildlife to come.

By making a commitment to Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy as part of your estate plan, you will become a member of the Oak Legacy Society, joining other thoughtful supporters who have made a gift to our future and to the permanence of land conservation in southwest Michigan.

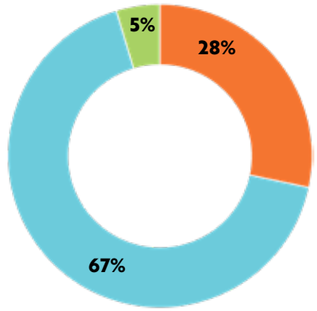
Feel free to contact us

If you're interested in discussing how you can accomplish your goals to leave a lasting gift, please call Peter Ter Louw for a confidential conversation at 269-324-1600, or send an email to conserveland@swmlc.org

CONSERVATION SNAPSHOT: Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy Financials, Fiscal 2019

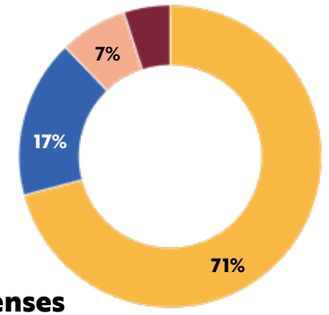
It's because of you and many other individuals, businesses, and foundations that we are able to conserve wild and scenic places in southwest Michigan – and to do so as a fiscally efficient and healthy organization.

For all that you have done to make this region a better place in which to live, work, and play, we thank you.



revenue

Contributions from Individuals and Foundations	$688,565
Government Grant Funded Conservation Projects	$291,090
Investments	$47,614
Total:	**$1,027,269**



expenses

Programs	$741,728
Stewardship	$177,340
Management & General	$75,847
Fundraising	$51,715
Total:	**$1,046,630**

Net change in assets: $ -19,361

Thank you to our 2019 Donors

To everyone who cared, volunteered, donated, conserved their land, and partnered with us in 2019, take pride in knowing that you belong to a community of passionate nature-lovers that are working to save the places we all love and connect people from all walks of life to the outdoors.

Together, we are making southwest Michigan a special place to live, work, and play.

Blue Green Society

To save the blue water, we must protect the green land.

Thank you to those who have joined the Blue Green Society and made an annual commitment of $1000 or more.

Anonymous (3)
Catherine and Dan Augenstein
Donald Ayer
Frank D. Ballo
Chuck and Jan Benner
Carole Birch
Jim and Patti Birkes
Peter R. Boerma
Brian and Lori Bosgraaf
Sherwood and Sharon Boudeman
George and Pat Burgoyne
Bob and Pat Burr
Dan and Stacy Burton
Larry and Barbara Case
Amy and Jason Cherry
John and Lynne Chipman
Patti Chipman
Thomas Coder
Dave Coleman
Maggie Coleman
Kalman and Becky Csia
Erwin H. and Debra Doerschler
Larry and Sherry Edris
Gussie Farris
Elisabeth R. French
Jim Galligan
John and Sharon Garside
Alfred and Jean Gemrich
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Florence F. Goodyear
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Tom and Lisa Groos
Bruce and Jeanne Grubb
Keto and Kathryn Gyekis
Henry B. Hawk
Larry and Noel Hayward
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Susan Houseman and Curtis E. Hall
Mary and Daniel Houser
Joel and Barbara Huber
Phil Johnson and Mary Baggerman
Alice Jones
W. Jack and Nanette M. Keiser
Rob and Donna Keller
Kenneth and Marlena Kirton
Phyllis LaVene
Robert and Joyce Leppard
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Philip Willson
Jack N. Wykoff
Arno and Pam Yurk

Would you like to join the Oak Legacy circle?

Oak Legacy

By arranging to make a planned gift, you will join these amazing people who know that today is the time to ensure conservation for tomorow.

Paula M. Allred
Susan Bond
Sherwood and Sharon Boudeman
Kristi and Stephen Chapman
Amy and Jason Cherry
Thomas Coder
Susan Gray
Barbara and John Guinness
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Todd and Amy Sanford
Jennifer Schwab and Tom Miller
Lawrence J. Sehy
Thomas H. Seiler
Patricia Smetana and Thomas Krol
Roger Taylor
Peter D. Ter Louw
Philip Willson

Thank you to our Oak Legacy members. If you have already included Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy in your will and/or estate plans, please set us know . . . we would love to thank you, too.

* If we accidently omitted your name, or you find an error, we apologize. Please call Nicole at 269-324-1600 x307 so we can correct the mistake. Thank you.

Porter Legacy Dunes | Amelia Hansen

2019 Membership Donations

Our work is possible because people like you care about the natural world and want to protect it for future generations. Thank you.

Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly ($1000+)

Rebecca Brock
Kristi and Stephen Chapman
Donald Cummings
Matthew and Angela Kuiper
Dave and Bridget Lemberg
Jim and Terry Novaria
Tom and Ruth Small
Dennis and Patricia Stelzer
Robert Swaney and Mary Stephenson-Swaney

Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake ($500+)

Anonymous
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Dana Buoscio and John Szewezyk
John R. and Barbara A. Chenault
Alica N. Cummings
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Tim and Julie Winslow

Cerulean Warbler ($250+)

Phil Albain
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Larry and Debi Zahn
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Spotted Turtle ($100+)

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Susan and Kerry Badger
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Kathy Fenton-Miller
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Joyce Fink
Dr. and Mrs. Clifton W. Fisher
Sarah Fitzpatrick
Randy Day and Betsy Floria

"... Just want to thank you for the preserves in our neck of the wood that my husband and I have enjoyed during our lockdown, Wau-ke-Na, Pilgrim Haven and Black River Preserve. All so well maintained and serene! "

— Eileen Mead, SWMLC member

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Mary Susan Brill
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Business, Club & Group Memberships

Berrien Birding Club
Black River Tavern
Great Lakes Adventure Club
Kalamazoo Garden Council, Inc.
Lake Village Homestead Farm
Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum
Niles Garden Club
Secure Start Inspections
Schlessman Seed Company
South Haven Garden Club

Gifts Beyond Membership

$1000 and Over

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Ned and Neva Asplundh
Donald Ayer
Peter Boerma
Sherwood and Sharon Boudeman
Tim Carlson
Patricia Chipman
Cody Kresta Vineyard & Winery
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Kalman and Becky Csia
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John and Cynthia Hartgerink
Patricia Herron
Susan Houseman and Curtis Hall
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Ed and Kathy Knox
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Robert Linderman
Bill and Jeannette Maxey
Peggy McTigue and David Miller
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South Haven Rotary Club
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Up to $1000

Anonymous (7)
Bruce Alden
Andrea M. Allen
Donald and Louise Anderson
Robert and Mary K. Andree
R.M. and M.C. Arceo
Robert Arvidson
Rob and Erin Augustine
Carol Austin
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Pamela Breniser
Jo Beth Bridleman
Brad Brunner
Dick and Lois Brunvand
Marie Bryant
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Christopher C. Bunch
George and Pat Burgoyne
Dan and Stacy Burton

Augusta Floodplain Forest. Rowcrop fields transitioning to a pollinator-focused prairie community, funded by USDA Conservation Reserve Program and USFWS Partners for Wildlife program | Mitch Lettow

2019 Gifts Beyond Membership CONTINUED

Carnegie Community Garden Club
Marilyn Case
Kim Cauchy
Adam Cefai
Richard and Joanne Chamberlin
Mike and Gayle Champagne
Kristi and Stephen Chapman
John R. and Barbara A. Chenault
Dallas Chester
Tony and Traci Chipman
Michael Clement
William Cochran
Robert and Elizabeth Code
Thomas Coder
Ashley Cole-Wick
Willard Fenton-Miller
Sarah Ferguson
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Karen Fitzner
Mike and Loree Flad
Mark A. Fleckenstein
Michael Fleckenstein
Jeff and Mary Fleming
Jane H. Fletcher
Christopher M. Flynn
Kelly Ford
Richard Ford

"Portman (Nature Preserve). . . has been a blessing to those who need a place to enjoy the outdoors."

— Dick and Becky Pasman

Jason Combs
Jeff Conner and Buffy Silverman
Karen and John Cooper
Jim and Jill Copeland
Ron and Linda Core
Harry and Mary Ellen Cotterill
Doug Coulter and Pam Hoppe
Robert and Nancy Cretsinger
Theodore and Pamela Cummins
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Building materials for the Mud Lake observation deck at Portman Nature Preserve

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Cleanup of flotsam on the beach at Wau-Ke-Na, William Erby Smith Preserve, North Tract

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Lumber for the Mud Lake observation deck at Portman Nature Preserve

Caitlin and Erkan Eyvaz, and Bradley and Kathy Sullivan
2005 Ford Expedition SUV

Jack O. Haeger
Sear's bench grinder

Jennifer and Matt Haywood
Assorted games and materials for HOP! prizes

Ronald L. Johnson
Mowing charges, refinished trail signs, and railing removal at Coon Hollow Preserve

"Part of nature's power lies in its ability to wash away whatever is provoking a lot of our stress. Slow movements such as the ripples of water or clouds moving across the sky place effortless demands on our working memory but enough to distract us from spiralling rumination, self-blame and hopelessness. Researchers call this capacity to hold our attention the "soft fascination" of nature."

— Gretchen C. Daily, Director, Center for Conservation Biology, Stanford University

Wau-Ke-Na, William Erby Smith Preserve, North Tract | Amelia Hansen

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Help nature every time you shop by using Amazon Smile!

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Half a percent may not sound like much but it adds up: as of mid-December 2019, SWMLC had received nearly $920 in AmazonSmile donations! And every little bit helps.

Make a difference for nature every month

Set up a sustaining membership that will be automatically billed to your credit card and you will provide Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy with a stable source of support.

You decide how much you want to contribute and how often: monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually.

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Double your impact!

Many corporations match their employees' contributions to Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy

Are you an employee of (or retired from) a company with a matching gift program? Just include your company form with your gift and we will be happy to follow up. Please call Nicole at 269-324-1600 x307 or email her at nmspeedy@swmlc.org.

Sharon Gill, SWMLC board member and Professor of Biological Sciences at WMU, has created a podcast to help people find inner balance through a series of listening exercises that deepens connections to nature in ways that are both new and traditional.

Listen to the podcast while walking in your favorite SWMLC preserve by visiting our website: www.swmlc.org/soundwalking-in-the-time-of-covid-19 Not into podcasts? A printable transcript is available at the same link.

These local sponsors are helping to bring nature to our community.

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Would you like to see your business save open space, care for nature, and connect people to the outdoors? Bring purpose and meaning to your organization or business by joining these generous community supporters.

Call Nicole at 269-324-1600 x307 to find out how.

Bumble bee populations are falling fast and researchers are trying to figure out why . . . **and YOU can help.**

Southwest Michigan Bee Watch is a citizen science project created by Kalamazoo College biology professor Ann Fraser and students Nikoli Nickson and Nicole Bailey. Their focus is on the diversity of local bumble bee species and their food plants at Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy preserves and Lillian Anderson Arboretum.

You can help by simply taking a walk in a SWMLC preserve where summer wildflowers are plentiful and photographing bumblebees (no special cameras required; smartphones work just fine). Then upload your photos to the iNaturalist database. Find easy video instructions here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_kl6ENpRn8&t=28s

Looking for bumblebees is a fun summer activity to do with kids. Plus, you have the satisfaction of knowing that you're making real contributions that will help these beloved insects.

Visit Southwest Michigan Bee Watch (www.swmbees.kzoo.edu) to learn more about the project.

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