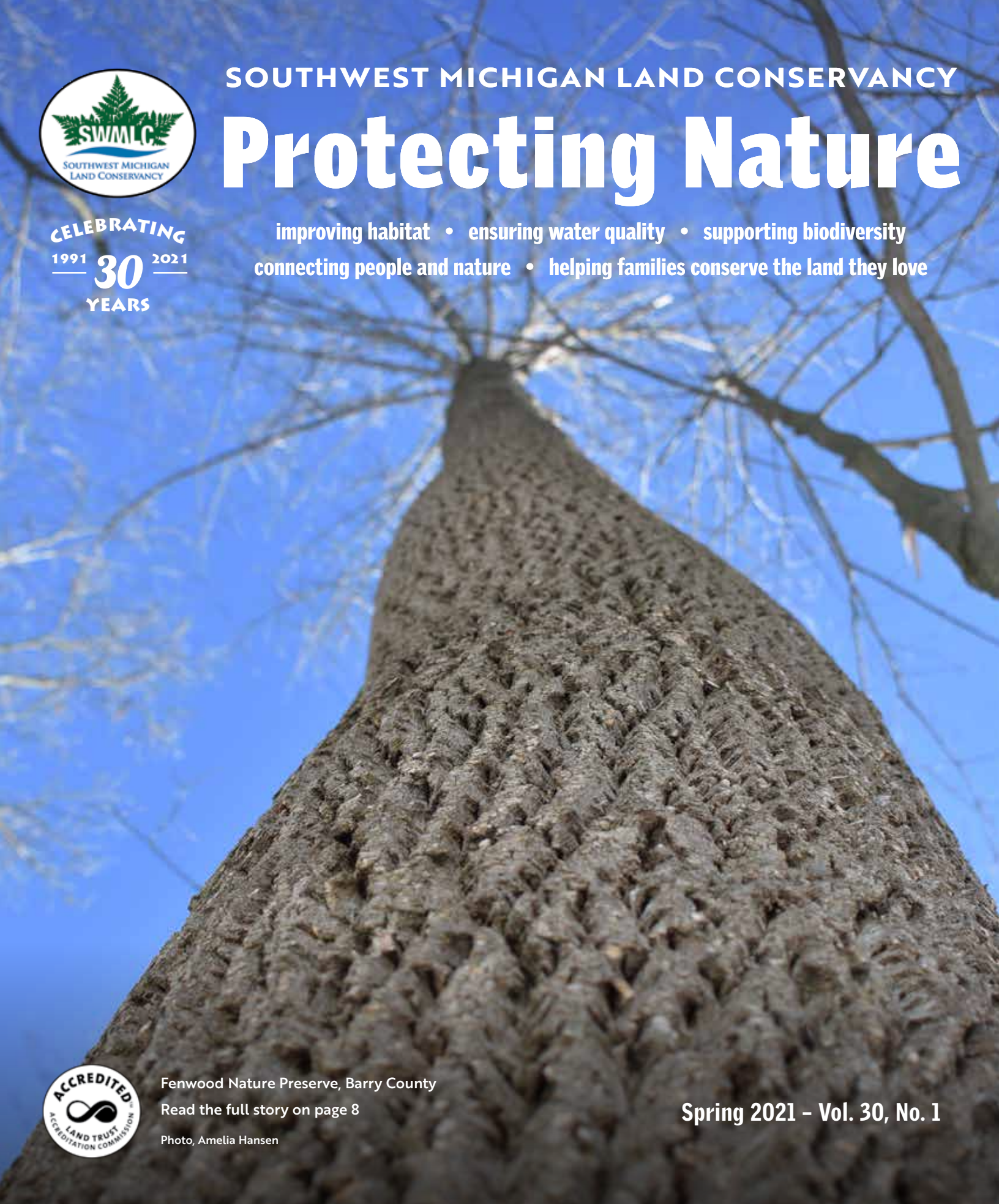
SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN LAND CONSERVANCY

Protecting Nature

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

CELEBRATING 1991 30 2021 YEARS



Fenwood Nature Preserve, Barry County
Read the full story on page 8
Photo, Amelia Hansen

Spring 2021 – Vol. 30, No. 1

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

Planning for Forever

Peter Ter Louw, President and Executive Director

Butler Conservation Easement, St. Joseph County | Bruce Howe

If there's any silver lining to this horrible pandemic, it's that it's helped us focus on what is truly important for each of us. Over the last year, when so much of our human world was closed, we turned to the places that were open – the green spaces and natural areas – and found that reconnecting with nature was both soothing and refreshing. We remembered how much nature means to us, and how important it is to protect it for future generations.

Here at Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, we experienced firsthand the incredible generosity and foresight of so many people in our community who love and value nature, and want to make sure that it will still be here for others, tomorrow. We were honored and humbled by your response to our year-end appeal this past fall (you exceeded our fundraising goal by 30%!), an appeal that was not for a specific project but in support of all the work we do to protect nature in southwest Michigan.

Today, we find ourselves blessed with more conservation opportunities than ever. New projects arise, such as our recent purchase and creation of Fenwood Nature Preserve near the Barry State Game Area (see page 8). Or, later this spring, when we will begin fundraising to conserve the 140-acre Armintrout-Milbocker Nature Preserve on the Kalamazoo River in the City of Allegan (see page 5). And over the past year, we've heard from dozens of people, old friends and new, who have called to ask how they can conserve their land because they have decided that **now** is the time to get serious about protecting their land forever.

At SWMLC, we're excited by these new opportunities to protect nature. But as we conserve more land, we find that we need more resources to look after it, too. 'Conserving land' sounds simple, but purchasing a property or placing a conservation easement on it is only the beginning. Our work continues long after the legal documents have been signed. There's the hard manual labor of removing invasive plants and restoring native landscapes. Private land that has been protected by a conservation easement must be checked annually to ensure that its conservation values are protected. Preserves with public access need infrastructure like parking, trails, and signage – all of which is expensive to build and maintain. And, we are committed (and legally bound) to protect and care for all of our conserved lands in perpetuity. In order to accomplish all of this, we must have a plan for organizational sustainability.

We are excited by these new opportunities to protect nature. But as we conserve more land, we find that we need more resources to look after it, too.

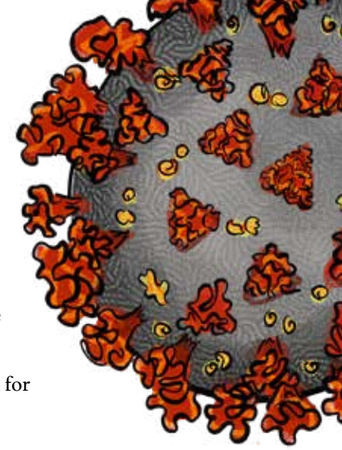
So, in looking toward our ongoing responsibility and obligation to protect our conserved land forever, we have created the Sustain SWMLC endowment fund, which will grow year after year, eventually yielding enough interest and dividends to pay for SWMLC's operating expenses in perpetuity.

If you, like so many of us, are looking for ways to make a positive, lasting impact amidst the hardships of this past year, would you consider making a gift to the Sustain SWMLC endowment fund as part of your legacy? If leaving a gift as part of your retirement or estate plan might help you fulfill your hopes for the future of nature in southwest Michigan, we would be honored for your consideration. I would be happy to speak with you anytime and answer any questions you might have.

Thank you for all of your support and your endless encouragement!

You may reach Pete by email at terlouw@swmlc.org or by calling and leaving a message at 269-324-1600, as we are currently still working from home due to the pandemic.

Image by Jae Rue from Pixabay



COVID-19 Update • *We've missed you!*

As we move into springtime and anticipate warmer weather to come, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy is hoping to schedule some small, limited-capacity in-person events that will enable us to get together to enjoy our preserves while still keeping everyone safe.

Our events this year will require registration, proper social distancing, masks, and any other current safety recommendations. Of course, what this year's events calendar looks like depends on how the pandemic situation unfolds, but we are optimistic that – with necessary precautions in place – we can soon begin to enjoy the preserves together.

Please watch our webpage at www.swmlc.org/swmlc-events-workdays, our E-News, and social media for more information on upcoming SWMLC events!

Happy Trails, Bruce!

Land Protection Specialist Bruce Howe has left SWMLC . . . and boy, will we miss him!

Bruce served several different roles in his six years with us, first working on – and then leading – the Stewardship Crew, where the phrase "Brucin' it up" was coined to describe his energy and never-say-die focus in the field.

Next, Bruce joined the Land Protection Department in 2017, where his kindness and ability to truly listen to others perfectly suited him to helping families protect the land they love by guiding them through the conservation easement process. In the region surrounding the Jones State Game Area, Bruce's effective work with like-minded organizations, state and local government, landowners, and volunteers helped SWMLC earn the Cass County Conservation District's 2019 Conservation Partner of the Year Award. And Bruce's serious map-making skills and his fabulous drone photography eloquently helped us tell our stories in print and online (see examples of both on page 5).

Those are great credentials but, mostly, we're just going to miss Bruce as a friend: his easy-going manner, willingness to help colleagues, and special brand of silliness. All the best to you in your next endeavor, Bruce . . .

. . . go "Bruce it up!"

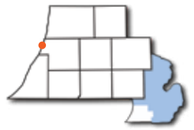
Bruce Howe at chainsaw training workshop | Mitch Lettow

Peaceful Places

Our busy daily lives don't leave much room for reflection, but nature offers a restful, peaceful place for us to process life's challenges, especially the loss of a loved one. For many of us, remembering our loved ones by providing places where other people can enjoy nature is the best way to honor them and their importance in our lives. Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy is now able to offer a limited number of memorial benches at selected locations in some of our most beloved preserves. If you're interested in honoring a loved one in this way, please contact Miko Dargitz by email (cmdargitz@swmlc.org) or phone (269-324-1600, ext. 302) to learn more.

Pilgrim Haven Natural Area, Van Buren County | Dave Brown

What's Next for Porter Legacy Dunes?



Porter Legacy Dunes is protected forever, thanks to generous, conservation-minded supporters like you who funded its purchase last year. So, what's next for the beautiful lakeshore preserve? Out of respect for its sensitive species and fragile dune habitats, our plans are moving forward with slow, cautious care as we prepare to open it to the public later this year.

The first consideration was the house and pole barn, which presented significant safety and maintenance liabilities. After an unsuccessful search for a buyer who was willing to move the house, the South Haven Area Recreational Authority (which officially owns the property) contracted to have those structures removed entirely. Because visitors will park next door at Pilgrim Haven Natural Area, we will let the forest reclaim this open area.

Next is to design an erosion-conscious trail system that invites visitors to explore the preserve's dunes and forests while minimizing damage to the loose, sandy soil from foot-traffic (and steering people away from some very luxuriant poison ivy). So, we've been consulting with the National Park Service through their Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program, which supports community-led conservation projects across the nation. We look forward to hearing their ideas.

And, though we're already aware of the property's amazing spring wildflowers and its unusually dense grove of paw paw trees, we plan to conduct a thorough natural features inventory later this spring to learn exactly what kinds of plants are growing there. This information will help us in performing stewardship activities and planning our trail system - we certainly don't want to blaze a trail right through a patch of the rare plants that make Porter so special in the first place!

We appreciate your patience as we prepare this delicate beauty for its public debut later in 2021!

Porter Legacy Dunes, Van Buren County | Mitch Lettow

Coming soon: a nature retreat near downtown Allegan!

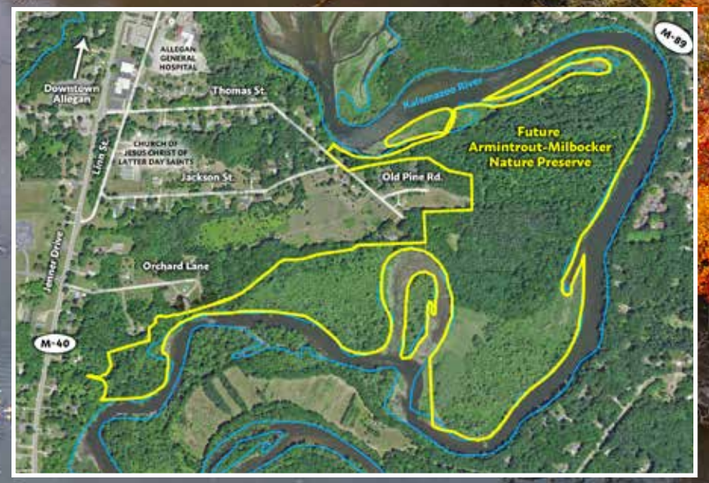
The Future Armintrout-Milbocker Nature Preserve

An accessible and ecologically healthy natural area less than five minutes from downtown Allegan, with three miles of walking trails that wind through 140 acres of towering pine and hardwood forests, providing visitors with stunning views of the Kalamazoo River.

We are working with federal, state, local, and private partners to secure the funding necessary to purchase the property, implement the public access infrastructure needed to make it a public nature preserve, and steward the land over the long-term.

Public fundraising to turn this spectacular property into a preserve for the entire community to enjoy will begin later this year.

We will keep you informed as this exciting project unfolds!



To learn more, please visit our website: www.swmlc.org/armintrout-milbocker-nature-preserve

Map and drone photo | Bruce Howe

Dave Brown

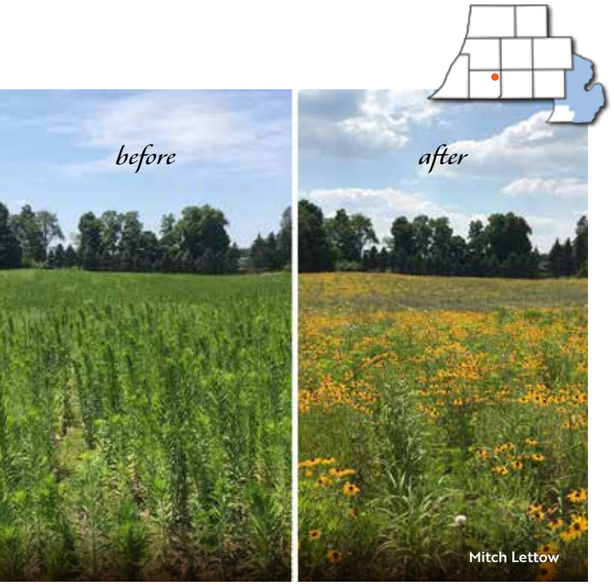
Locust Posts

Like everything, more work goes into creating a preserve entrance sign than meets the eye.

Farmers have used cut black locust trees as fence posts for eons because they are slow to rot when buried in soil. The hard, dense wood quickly dulls chainsaw blades and kills cordless drill batteries – "but the hardest part of all is finding straight ones without gnarly knots" says Dave Brown, SWMLC Stewardship Specialist. He and the Stewardship Crew (Megan Martin, Jess Vanden Berg, and Alex Wubben-Zudweg) recently harvested black locust trees at Chipman Preserve, cutting two trailer loads of 16-foot poles that we will use in the future for signposts, trailhead kiosk supports, and parking lot bollards. Finding practical uses for the trees is a win-win because the southern species is invasive here in Michigan, where it can quickly grow into dense thickets that shade out other plants.

Earlier this winter, Dave installed a new entrance sign at Hidden Marsh Sanctuary that has locust tree trunk posts, with help from volunteer Damien Newburry, whose invaluable assistance in auguring the holes whittled a full-day job down to just a few hours. As always, Matt Sikkema at Bart's Banners and Signs of Portage did a great job custom fitting the irregularly shaped wooden posts to the straight lines of the sign panel. The rustic, bark-on posts soften the look of the eye-catching sign, giving it a "steam punk, hipster farm look." Maybe not what we were going for but we can live with that!

Many thanks to everyone involved!



Mitch Lettow

Before – and After!

The weeds, called horseweed or mare's tail, had taken over a former farm field in the upland portion of Tamarack Swamp Preserve, a large SWMLC preserve in Cass County that isn't open to the public due to its sensitivite wetland habitats. The lush mare's tail was nearly 8 feet high in places, but it was a food desert for wildlife because its flowers make little nectar for pollinating insects and its fluffy seeds don't appeal to birds.

Wanting to improve the habitat, SWMLC applied to several federal programs that help private landowners create pollinator habitat on former farmland. With funding from both the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program and the USFWS's Partners program, we seeded about 50 acres at Tamarack Swamp back in spring 2019. The Black-eyed Susans, lance-leaved coreopsis, and wild rye seen in the "after" photo were just some of the many species included in the native seed mix. But before any of that could happen, generous volunteers donated time, sweat, and machinery to mow the mare's tail so those seeds could have a chance.

Fast forward to late summer 2020 and – **wow!** Those fields weren't just pretty; they were also chock full of wildflowers that provide a bounty of nectar to butterflies, bees, and other pollinating insects. And songbirds that love open spaces, like meadowlarks and native sparrows, built nests among the sheltering plant stems and found plenty of insects to feed their babies.

Before? Sad weeds that provide little food for wildlife . . . **After?** A colorful mix of native wildflowers and grasses that are eye candy for humans and a feast for pollinating insects!

Peter Ter Louw

Providing a Place to "Be"

Butler Conservation Easement Completed

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy recently completed its 104th conservation easement, protecting 175 acres in St. Joseph County – thanks to the generosity of Ron and Sharron Butler.

Ron and Sharron Butler | Bruce Howe

Ron and Sharron Butler have a soft spot for injured animals. Sharron is a state-licensed wildlife rehabber who specializes in raptors and has the training, mental toughness, skills, wisdom, and facilities needed to nurse injured hawks back to health. She and Ron also know that, without wild places, there is nowhere in which to release them. So they took action to protect their 175 acres of woods, fields, and wetlands by placing a conservation easement on them through Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy.

Ron grew up on the property, which has been in his family for about 45 years. Some of it is prime agricultural land that is still farmed. A full 20 acres of it has been planted with pollinator-friendly native grasses and flowers. About 30 acres of it are forested wetland, the kind of place that's too wet and buggy for most humans – and perfect for many kinds of animals. And in the center, there is a magnificent woods, 70 contiguous acres of mature oak-hickory forest. The Butlers know that high-quality, unbroken habitat like that is important for wildlife, and that it's becoming increasingly rare.

Ron and Sharron were concerned about development, having seen other properties near their St. Joseph County land get bought and then cut up into small pieces. They didn't want that to happen to their property, so they very generously donated the conservation easement to SWMLC. Meeting with SWMLC Land Protection Specialist Bruce Howe last fall, they signed the papers to make it official: now, no matter who owns the property in the future, the land and habitat will be protected forever.

People with giving spirits like the Butlers are as important as those big woods on their property – and we're very grateful to them.

Thank you Ron and Sharron!

Rebecca Young and her dog, Thunder | White Photography, Hastings

The bog at Fenwood Nature Preserve | Amelia Hansen

This is what we do. SWMLC helps people like Rebecca Young explore their land protection options to see if conservation is right for them and, as a community-supported organization, **YOU make this possible.** Your desire to conserve special, natural places in Michigan has protected over 17,000 acres in the last 30 years. **Together, we are making a difference.**

Curious about land protection options? Give us a call at 269-324-1600 or email conserveland@swmlc.org to request a confidential conversation with our land protection specialists, Emily or Hilary.

"I've Always Felt this Way"

Like so many of us, Rebecca Young is happiest when she's doing stuff outdoors. She stays busy with outdoor projects and keeps a daily date with her property, walking the trails round the seasons with her pack of sweet German short-haired pointers and strengthening ties to her land.

That land is certainly special. Picturesque old oaks, hickories, beeches, tulip poplars, and white pines grow on the high, rolling ridges. From these wooded hills, tree branches frame calendar-caliber views of neighboring pastures and farms. The main walking trail dips down to a forested wetland where a tributary to Glass Creek is fed by clean groundwater, and gently flows among blue beeches and yellow birches. It's a beautiful place.

But what makes it truly unique is an odd arrangement of geology and hydrology that results in the surprisingly close proximity of a bog and a fen, two very different and highly sensitive wetland habitats, separated only by a low ridge.

Settled into a low area, the bog is a classic example of its kind, with characteristic humps of sphagnum moss surrounded by a moat of open water. Because it is cut off from the life-giving minerals and oxygen of ground water sources by some quirk of geology, the bog is fed only by surface runoff and its water has turned acidic over time. This acidity slows the decomposition of the sphagnum moss, resulting in distinctive, thick layers of "peat." Only a few bog-specific plant species can tolerate this environment, such as the uncommon Virginia chain fern.

Just over the ridge, there's the fen, which is fed by mineral rich groundwater and is a hotbed of plant diversity. Many species grow here, including the uncommon purple-stem angelica, which can grow to 10 feet tall in just one summer!

"In my line of work, I've observed that bogs and fens are very uncommon in southern Michigan and rarely occur in such proximity to each other anywhere in Michigan," remarked Keto Gyekis, SWMLC Board member and Wetland Identification Program Coordinator with Michigan EGLE. "Preservation is especially important, as these ecological systems cannot be effectively restored if they become severely degraded."

Though Rebecca admits to not knowing a lot about bogs and fens, she still knew from the start that her Barry County property was special. With an eye toward preservation, she slowly expanded her original 12-acre purchase to 76 acres by buying the beautiful property behind it in pieces over time.

Knowing that she wanted to conserve her property, a mutual friend introduced Rebecca to Emily Wilke, Conservation Projects Manager at Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. Emily was pleased to learn that Rebecca's land was located directly across the road from another protected property, a small separate part of Michigan Audubon's Otis Lake Sanctuary. "We set a goal back in 2009 with our conservation partners to conserve 20% more land - or 2,000 acres - in and around the Barry State Game Area in 10 years' time. It may take a little longer than we expected but we're still inching our way there and, collectively, we've conserved about 1,300 acres so far. Rebecca's 76 acres will push us that much closer towards our goal."

But even with the best of intentions, land purchases are costly and Rebecca found that she wasn't in the financial position to easily transfer the property. It looked tricky until Tyden Ventures learned of the predicament. Passionate about protecting nature locally, Tyden generously provided funding that enabled SWMLC to buy the property from Rebecca. And in this particular win-win deal, technically called a 'life estate', the property (now called Fenwood Nature Preserve), will remain a private residence into the foreseeable future. Rebecca can live there for as long as she wishes, and rest easy knowing that it will be protected forever.

"In my line of work, I've observed that bogs and fens are very uncommon in southern Michigan and rarely occur in such proximity to each other anywhere in Michigan."

— Keto Gyekis, SWMLC Board member and Wetland Identification Program Coordinator with Michigan EGLE

When asked why she cares so much about protecting her land, Rebecca reflects that she has been a naturalist since she was a girl, from before she even knew the word. Then her voice grows firm, "I hate to see humans ransack the land for short term profit and then just throw it away. Humans should not destroy the natural world. I've always felt this way."

Thank you for your generosity and conservation spirit, Rebecca Young and Tyden Ventures!

Bucking the Trend

Protecting rural character in the face of development

There's a large area on the west side of Gull Lake that might look very different if it weren't for Woody Boudeman and his family.

Without their conservation efforts, those golden autumn leaves might not frame East BC Avenue in that same satisfying way, those big fields of green could be filled with houses, and the secluded ponds just beyond that line of trees might be gone. The Boudemans have worked with Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC) for many years to protect the rural character and beauty of this area, and it shows.

Early this winter, Woody met with SWMLC's Emily Wilke and Pete Ter Louw to donate a conservation easement on another 54 acres that includes farmland, a restored grassland, and a human-made pond with wetlands. Combined with land that Woody has already protected, the addition creates a 742-acre agricultural/natural area that can never be developed on the northeast corner of the busy intersection where highways M-43 and M-89 meet, just north of the village of Richland.

Woody is one of SWMLC's founding board members and has long been committed to protecting farmland and nature in this area where land values are high and development pressure is strong. New neighborhoods, an expanding commercial corridor, and a proposed gravel pit are just some of the recent land-use activities that prompted him to purchase the 54-acre piece with the sole intention of protecting it.

Woody advises others, "Don't wait to do something to make a better world." Putting those words into action, the Boudeman Family has conserved over 1,100 acres of farm fields, forests, grasslands, small lakes, streams, and pretty views in Barry and Kalamazoo Counties by donating conservation easements to SWMLC. With this latest addition, they have conserved over one square mile of land on the west side of Gull Lake. And while the Boudemans' land remains private and is not a public preserve, the conservation easements they have placed will protect it forever, no matter who owns it in the future.

"Don't wait to do something to make a better world."

— Woody Boudeman

If ever you're driving through that tunnel of tree shade on East BC Avenue, marveling at flocks of cranes polishing off harvest leftovers in a farm field north of Richland, or imagining the secret local spots where wildlife lives without being bothered by people – thank the Boudeman Family for their generosity and deep commitment to conservation.

Things would be very different without them!

The Boudeman Family has protected more than 700 acres, stretching nearly to Gull Lake, shining in the distance in this aerial image. Drone photo, Bruce Howe.

Mission: POSSIBLe!

On a mission . . . a wild and woolly mission! That's the attitude that SWMLC's Stewardship Crew (Mitch, Dave, Megan, Jess, and Alex) took when they stomped out into the woods looking for wild and woolly foes – hemlock woolly adelgids, that is.

Megan Martin measuring a tree's diameter, Allegan Co.
Photo, Mitch Lettow.

Hemlock woolly adelgids (pronounced "a-dell-jids") (aka HWA) are soft-bodied insects that create a layer of white, waxy "wool" in which to protect themselves while they grow – and while they're sucking the life out of hemlock trees. That's literally what they do: jam their mouthparts into the soft tissue at the base of needles and buds to suck sap, robbing the tree of nutrients and water until the branches wither and then, slowly, the entire tree dies.

Because HWA is not native to North America (having been accidentally imported on nursery stock in the 1950's), eastern hemlocks have no defense against the fearsome pest. HWA has devastated hemlock trees in eastern Canada and the United States – and completely destroyed entire mountainside forests in the Appalachians.

Look for small white blobs stuck to the underside of needles, singly or in groups.
Photo, Nicholas A. Tonelli from Northeast Pennsylvania; USA

Cold temperatures used to keep HWA away from our area, but the last few mild winters have changed that and HWA is no longer just a scary rumor: it's here in west Michigan. It's been spreading slowly north along the Lake Michigan coast for a while now but conservationists' alarm shot up a notch when it reached Bass Lake (near Ludington) last spring. And though we hadn't seen it in any SWMLC preserves yet, we knew it was just a matter of time before we did because private landowners just to the north of Wau-Ke-Na, WE Smith Preserve, North Tract were already dealing with it.

After seeing how quickly HWA has crushed hemlocks in other parts of the country, taking action now seemed like the right thing to do. So, with grant funding from the Wildlife Conservation Society's Climate Adaptation Fund (which is generously supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation), SWMLC and our project partners Ottawa County Parks, The Nature Conservancy-Michigan, Chikaming Open Lands, and Shirley Heinze Land Trust have been exploring new ways to keep our forests healthy in the face of threats like HWA.

We began by sending letters to landowners near Wau-Ke-Na North, asking if they would like to be included in a project where we would survey, measure, tag, and treat their Eastern hemlock trees with HWA-targeted insecticide. 25 neighbors said "yes!"

Hemlock monitoring, Wau-Ke-Na Preserve North Tract, Allegan County
Photo, Mitch Lettow

Admired for its soft sprays of shiny green foliage, the stately, eastern hemlock can grow up to 100 feet tall and live for more than 500 years – and many yard-sized versions have been developed for landscaping. Its high branches and heavy foliage offer safe nesting spots for birds like Blackburnian and black-throated green warblers, while its seed cones provide winter food for birds like crossbills and pine siskins. Hemlocks help keep streams cold and clear by shading banks and reducing muddy runoff with their dense foliage, creating good spawning habitat for trout and other cold-water fish. And even though hemlocks aren't usually the dominant tree in the forest, their dense shade creates "micro-habitats" that are home to salamanders, fungi, lichens, and certain orchids.

Illustration | Amelia Hansen

Next, we needed to find the trees. Eastern hemlocks are not as common in our area as maples and oaks, so the Stew Crew explored over 300 acres of back dune forests and glacial ravines near the lakeshore on foot – and found way more hemlocks than expected. We were delighted, even if it meant more work, because hemlocks are great indicators of high-quality habitat and their presence reflects well on the surrounding natural area.

Once a hemlock was found, Crew members gave each tree its own unique tag, measured how big around it was, took GPS coordinates so they could find it again, and looked for signs of HWA – especially those small white blobs stuck to the underside of needles. All the info went into a database. Our goal is to treat all of the trees with a preventative insecticide that has been proven to allow infected trees to regain health while preventing HWA infections in healthy trees, with minimal damage to other organisms. Our partners at Ottawa County Conservation District conducted the insecticide injections for us - treating 1,101 trees in 40 hours! Huge thanks to those guys!

These insecticide treatments will only last for 5 to 7 years but that will buy us some time while researchers around the world rush to find answers to this catastrophic problem, breeding HWA-resistant trees and perfecting effective bio-controls. And who knows? Solutions like these may soon be widely available, and then we can all kiss those woolly little adelgids goodbye for good!

A longer version of this article appears on our website, with links and lots of photos. Find it at www.swmlc.org/hemlocks-for-the-holidays.

This year, SWMLC is partnering with the SWxSW Corner Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA), West Michigan Conservation Network, and other conservation organizations to survey hemlock trees for HWA throughout Allegan, Van Buren, and Berrien Counties. This cooperative partnership has enabled the CISMA to check hundreds of hemlock trees in just a few short weeks – but there are still thousands more that need to be surveyed! We know that HWA has been found as far south as Fennville but it could be spreading further right under our noses . . . to determine just how far south the infestation has moved, we need to connect with property owners in Berrien, Van Buren, and southern Allegan Counties.

If you own land with hemlock trees between South Haven and Fennville, please contact the SWxSW Corner CISMA HWA Survey Team at swmihwa@gmail.com or (269) 657-4030 ext. 5 to schedule a quick, easy, FREE survey of your property!

We want to get to know you better!

Please take a short survey that will not only help us get to know you better, but will also help make SWMLC a more effective conservation organization.

We would like to get your thoughts on a variety of topics related to SWMLC's conservation work in southwest Michigan. Each of our 2021 newsletters will include a link to a very short online survey, securely hosted by Survey Monkey.

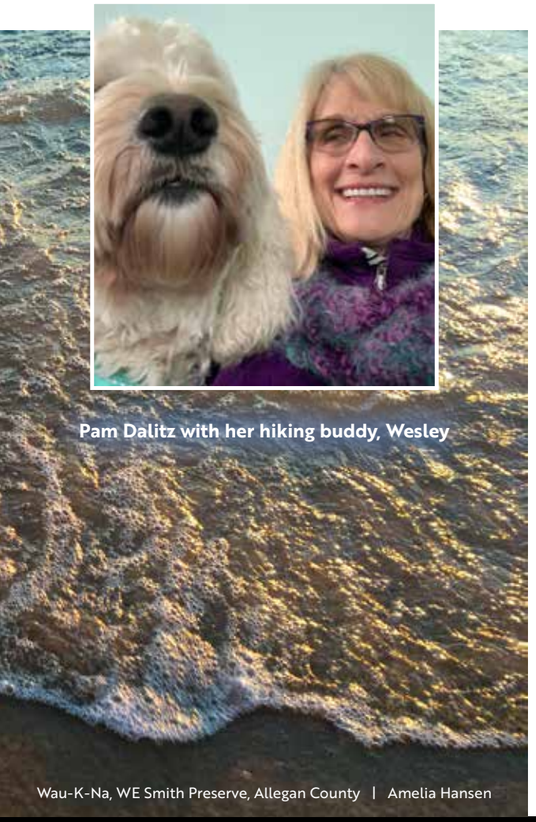
We hope you will participate and look forward to your candid responses and new ideas!

Survey #1: SWMLC Swag

What do you think about the use of items bearing SWMLC's logo as a way to raise awareness about us and our conservation work in the community?

This survey will take about two minutes to complete. To reach the survey, please use this QR code or type this link into your browser:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/D2YCMDH



Pam Dalitz with her hiking buddy, Wesley

Nature, the "Newest Miracle Drug"

Pam Dalitz, SWMLC Volunteer Social Hike Leader
and retired Registered Nurse

Never have I ever met a drug or treatment as gentle and effective as nature. In my first career as a Recreation Therapist, we used to take depressed and otherwise unwell patients out into nature to hike and cross-country ski. We would start most outings with a van-full of nervous and stressed-out adult patients but inevitably return with calmer, more encouraged participants.

Nature offers tangible benefits. Getting out into fresh air and listening to the raw sounds of wind blowing and birds singing can be therapeutic on its own. Add the tangible challenges that our earth offers and nearly anyone can reap a feeling of accomplishment, while learning patience and self-acceptance. For example, when a hill that seems like an unachievable climb is broken into lots of shorter traverses, it can become an enjoyable trek with a wondrous view to remember.

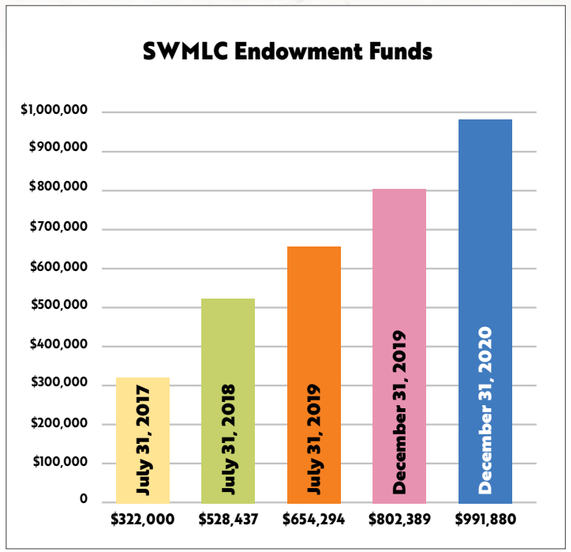
Who could ever stand in the midst of a beautiful meadow and feel less positive than they did before?

Together, we are preserving wild and scenic places for today . . . and keeping them healthy for tomorrow.

YOU CAN HELP by making a planned gift to Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy.

Planned gifts can come in many forms – from bequests to IRA distributions to gifts of land or other property. Your gift may be directed toward land protection, stewardship, or program funds. Or you can contribute to one of our two endowment funds, the Sustain SWMLC Endowment Fund or the George Lauff Land & Stewardship Endowment Fund. These internal endowment funds will grow year after year, eventually paying for SWMLC's basic operating expenses and ensuring that SWMLC will continue to protect and care for our natural areas for generations to come.

Whatever the gift, we are immensely grateful for the foresight and commitment of those who leave planned gifts to further the cause of conservation even beyond their lifetimes.



Thank you.

To learn more about making a planned gift to SWMLC, please visit our website (www.swmlc.org/support-our-work) or contact President and Executive Director Pete Ter Louw at terlouw@swmlc.org.

Thank You!

You sent 2020 off with a huge bang!

Thanks to generous donations from people like you, we were able to fully meet the $40,000 matching challenge issued by former SWMLC board chair Dave Coleman.

In fact, you exceeded that goal by approximately 44%!

We are beyond humbled by the incredible support everyone has shown to us this year. Like all nonprofits, we knew 2020 would be a difficult year . . . not only for us, but for everyone who has suffered through this pandemic.

We are so grateful that, even in the midst of these trying times, people like you dug deep in support of nature and helped to give for those who weren't able to contribute this year.

Thank you for making a difference!

Chipman Preserve, Kalamazoo County
Photo, Lynda Anderson

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Thank you!

Donations • October 1, 2020 – January 31, 2021

You make our work possible.

The following contributions were made by people who love the forests, fields, lakes, marshes, prairies, rivers, streams, swamps, and woods of Southwest Michigan.

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Bud and Judi Baldwin
In honor of Woody Boudeman at Christmas

Vita Benson
Holiday gift in honor of Raye Bransdorfer Polasek

Christopher C. Bunch
Holiday gift donation for the Bunch family – Tim, Theresa, Amanda, and Curtis

Penelope Cole
This donation is a Christmas gift to my sister, Candace Leonard

Becky Csia
In honor of Ilse Gebhard, of Jan Shillito, of Joyce Leppard, of Melanie Perry, and of Mary Wyatt.

Sharon Carlson and Thomas Dietz
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In honor of Tom Deitz and Sharon Carlson, of Thomas Seiler, and of Tom and Ruth Small

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In honor of Pat Hickok

Pam Hjelmquist
In honor of Kenneth Kirton for Christmas

Katya Hokanson
In honor of my aunt and SWMLC supporter Charlotte Mittler

Kalamazoo Area Women's Club-GFWC
In honor of Hilary Hunt's presentation to our group

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In honor of Don J. Sayan

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In honor of The Trekkers

Jennifer Mark
This gift is on behalf of Randy Mark

Anne May
In honor of the Moore children

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Donation made on behalf of Carl T. Baker. Merry Christmas!

Donald Miller
In honor of Sam Boase-Miller, of Chris Miller, and of Ben Miller

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In honor of Chris and Patty Ruppel – Merry Christmas!

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In honor of Mary Ellen Hains, and of Tom and Ruth Small

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In honor of Timothy R. Stickland and of Dr. Ronald McCormick

David Walch
In honor of Lorri Walch

Barbara Walters
In honor of Kalman and Becky Csia's birthdays

Wild Ones, Kalamazoo Area Chapter
In honor of David Mindell's presentation to the Kzoo Wild Ones. Grateful thanks to all that SWMLC does to preserve/improve sensitive areas.

Bruce and Jean Williams
In honor of Rob and Julia DelSignore, and of Travis and Sarah Simmons

Memorials

Susan Allen
In memory of my dear aunt, Susan Allen

Susan and Tom Brooks
In memory of Daniel Russell

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Nancy Goodrich
In memory of Charles Goodrich

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The R.J. Williams Family
"Loving memories are abundant for Donalee A. Williams, a most remarkable friend, wife and mother who shared a lifetime of nearly world-wide music making and love of the natural world, including her usual seasonal avian friends."

In Memory of Joseph Ferrara
Joan Orman and Eric Bekker

Pam Dalitz, "A true friend of nature, and of all who worked with him."

Nancy and Bob Miller

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In Memory of Thomas Murch
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In-Kind Donations

Ron Johnson
Mowing services at Coon Hollow Preserve

William Gregory Myrkle, Jr.
Photographs for Annual Year End Appeal promotional materials

Sanford Financial
Financial services

And THANK YOU to our "snow angels," *those generous preserve stewards who have been plowing snow in our preserve parking lots.*

Gift Memberships

Anonymous
to Kristy Mollitor

Anonymous
to Holly Rogers-Rios

Dave Brown
to Bev and Chuck Brown, "In honor of my grandparents, Fred and Barb Warren, and Chuck and Josephine Brown."

Valerie Campbell
to Rachel Leightner

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to Robert and Marcia Ostrowski
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Mia and Annie Waldron
to Jonathan Waldron

Welcome to New Members!

Blue Green Society ($1000 sustaining)

Robert and Patricia Huiskamp

Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly ($1000+)

Judge Stanley and Edith Hill

David and Constance Stumbras

Cerulean Warbler ($250+)

Jason Byler

Robert and Laura Eversole

Douglas R. Ray

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Bow in the Clouds Preserve, Kalamazoo County
Photo, Nate Fuller

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All programs and services are provided on a nondiscriminatory basis. Federal EIN 38-3038708