



LANDMARKS

Newsletter of the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy

Fall 2022



A Public Hike at Lost Lake Nature Preserve.

Photo by Mark Even

Welcome to the Naturehood: SMLC's New Public Access Amenities

By Jill A. Lewis, Executive Director

Public access to nature is important for facilitating the connection of people and nature. It's also a key component so that people can experience positive health and well-being benefits when they are out in nature. When public access is limited or non-existent, then protected natural areas and other green spaces can be viewed as walled off, exclusive and untouchable.

In 2016, The Nature Conservancy-Washington published a ground-breaking report entitled "Outside Our Doors: the benefits of cities where people and nature thrive". This report highlighted key proven concepts that make a difference in an urban setting to quality of life, health and general well-being. When nature is nearby and accessible, some of the cited benefits include:

Promoting well-being

this includes less mental stress

Inspiring physical activity

residents are 3x more likely to be physically active

Helping children learn

children with ADHD have higher concentration following a 20-minute walk in green space

However, if there is limited to no access to urban natural areas the connection between people and nature is lower even if scenic value is still present.

Southeast Michigan is largely recognized as an urban region despite its pockets of farmland, extensive waterways, and fragmented natural areas. Public access to nature in our region is vital to overall community and regional health per numerous studies on the importance of being out in nature: mentally, physically, and spiritually.

SMLC's mission includes enriching the lives of people. The Conservancy has loosely defined this to mean: access to nature, learning about nature, and community fellowship at natural areas events.

Continued on page 11

A Look Inside

Fundraising News	3
Conservancy Farm Restoration	4-5
Stewardship Update	6-7
Chapter News & Garden Update	8
Conservation Profile	9
Summer Celebration	10
Wildlife Sightings	11

LANDMARKS

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Conservation is in our Nature.

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Message from the Executive Director, Jill A. Lewis



Restoration has been a theme this past year. Two significant Superior Greenway projects took place that culminate years of effort to enhance wildlife habitat and improve visitor experiences at the Conservancy Farm and the Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve. For more on the Conservancy Farm restoration project, please see pages 4 and 5. The prairie restoration at the Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve was spearheaded by the Superior Township Chapter. Chapter members facilitated a 2021 SMLC project grant from the Ann Arbor Farm & Garden organization. This project built upon prior preserve entrance improvements and the installation was completed this past summer. Please see page 8 for more information.

Public access improvements are underway at the Secrest Nature Preserve and the Sibley Prairie Nature Preserve – West Prairie site. See pages 1 and 11 for more information about these exciting projects. Both projects include establishing “marquee” name signs in prominent locations so that preserve visitors and local drivers are aware these are SMLC properties. SMLC is also establishing a marquee name sign at the Lost Lake Nature Preserve parking lot in Oakland County. These projects complete the property-readiness plans for all three preserves and are being funded from prior SMLC project campaigns.

SMLC is fortunate to have many volunteers who assist with our operational and governance work. Two individuals were especially instrumental this past year: **George Kasdorf** and **James Weiner**. George does a variety of tasks from preserve maintenance to servicing SMLC’s equipment. During our staffing transition this past summer, George took on more to help maintain trails, fields and signage. Jim is SMLC’s attorney and has been invaluable in providing 2022 legal services for a number of important projects and developments. **Thank you**, George and Jim! To see additional volunteer acknowledgements please see pages 7 and 10.

Finally, SMLC is currently pursuing the federal Employee Retention Tax Credit and anticipates receipt of qualified funds next year. This is the end of the pandemic funding for SMLC and it made a big difference during the last two years. SMLC relies on donor and funder support to meet our annual revenue goals and this year that support is especially key given 2022’s inflationary impact on project expenditures. Your donations can help SMLC end the year in a position of strength and resilience. Thank you for your support.



Conservancy Farm Prairie.

Photo by Joel Geffen



Land Trust Alliance Accreditation

SMLC registered for the recent Land Trust Accreditation Commission's (the Commission) application lottery and was selected in September. We are completing final requirements for the pre-application due in the winter of 2023. The Commission verifies a land trust's compliance with the Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices (Standards) by evaluating a sample of the indicator elements within the Standards.

A few indicator element examples include: annually monitoring SMLC's conservation easements and nature preserves, following due diligence criteria when acquiring new lands, and ensuring there are adequate funds for land stewardship and legal defense.



SMLC's Fall Membership Drive

Do you want to help SMLC achieve more of our mission and LTA Standards and Practices? Make your year-end donation today (or before year-end) by mailing a check made payable to "Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy" to: 8383 Vreeland Rd., Superior Township, MI 48198 or donating online at www.smlcland.org. You can also donate to SMLC during the 2022 Giving Tuesday event on November 29th. Watch our Facebook page for more information.

"**Giving Tuesday** is a global generosity movement unleashing the power of radical generosity. Giving Tuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. Since then, it has grown into a year-round global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate, and celebrate generosity." givingtuesday.org

Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy's 2022
SUMMER CELEBRATION at the FARM

Thank You to our Sponsors!



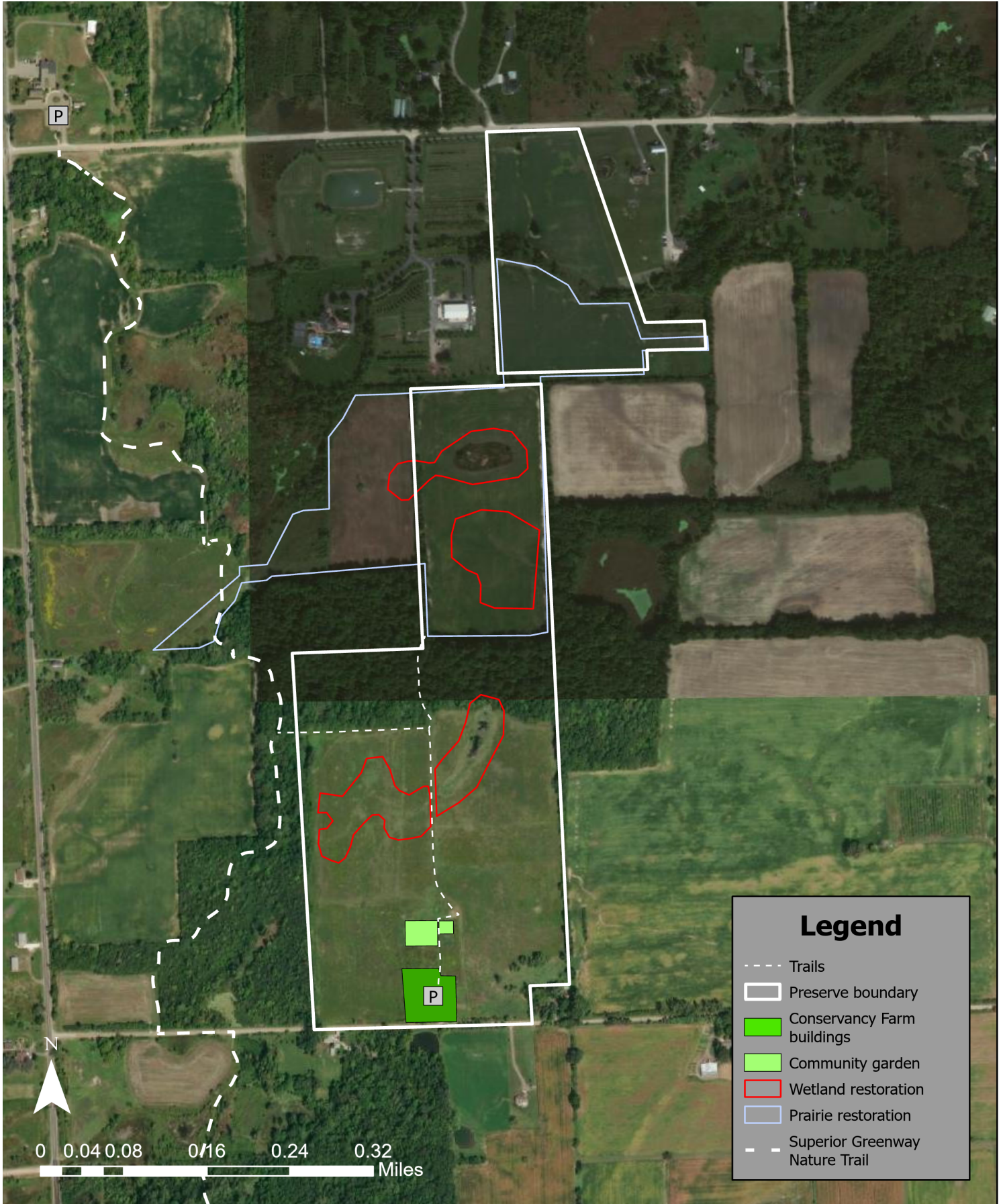
SMLC is deeply grateful to all of the other businesses, individuals, and volunteers who contributed to our Celebration.

Benefits of Land Trust Accreditation:

- 55% more financial supporters and land trust budgets double in size*
- 3x more volunteers*
- 5x more land protected*
- Qualifying for opportunities limited to accredited land trusts

*as compared to eligible non-accredited land trusts; per the Land Trust Accreditation Commission

2022 Conservancy Farm Restoration Map



Conservancy Farm Restoration: Benefits and Outcomes

By Jill A. Lewis, Executive Director

The 2022 Conservancy Farm Restoration Project was successfully completed this past September. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program project leverages almost \$31,000 in federal funding. Project partners are Ducks Unlimited and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Results are an enhanced 12.5 acres of emergent wetland and newly restored 30.2 acres of native upland prairie that are located at the site of former agricultural fields.

The project benefits as determined by SMLC’s Stewardship Committee include:

- Buffering 69 acres of existing woodlands – local wildlife habitat will increase from 109 acres to 138 contiguous acres
- Increasing grassland birds nesting and migration habitat
- Providing resources for pollinators and other insects
- Increased water quality in the area due to perennial native vegetation (reduces erosion, chemical runoff and sedimentation of nearby waterways)

Desired outcomes include:

- A thriving local population of native insects, amphibians, birds and other wildlife that rely on grasslands and wetlands as part of their life cycle
- An increase in migrating birds using the site
- A more pleasant experience for the Farm’s trail users



Great Blue Heron.

Photo by Wendy Pellerito

Wetland excavation in August 2022.

Photo by George Kasdorf



Conservancy Farm Restoration Timeline and Next Steps

- **June 2021** — Stewardship Committee met to review restoration proposal
- **August 2021** — Staff, Board of Directors, Stewardship Committee, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service met for site walk
- **Winter 2021** — Project approved by Board of Directors
- **April 2022** — Landowner Agreement signed between SMLC, Ducks Unlimited, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- **June 2022** — Fields treated with herbicide and seeded with native wildflowers and warm season grasses
- **August 2022** — Wetlands constructed and grasslands mown
- **September 2022** — Berms seeded with a mix of warm and cool season grasses

What’s Next?

- **2023 & 2024** — Mow grasslands, spot spray invasive species, and inspect wetland berms, water control structures, and spillways
- **2025 & 2026** — Grassland maintenance on 1/3 of grasslands, inspect wetland berms, water control structures, and spillways

Blazing Star Borer Moth at West Prairie

By Peter Blank, Northwest Ohio Restoration Manager, The Nature Conservancy - Ohio

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Ohio has been assisting with stewardship and restoration of SMLC's West Prairie Preserve since 2015. TNC has received several grants that have allowed us to control invasive plants and assist with other SMLC initiatives at the preserve. We have focused on West Prairie because it lies within the boundary of the Oak Openings Region. The Oak Openings is a 1,300-square mile region in Ohio and Michigan with unique geologic and hydrologic features that have given rise to globally rare wetland and upland habitats and a biodiversity hotspot. TNC has been working in the region for decades to protect and restore this incredible resource and to educate the public and private landowners about it.

Recent grants received by TNC have allowed us to continue work on West Prairie. We received two grants from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service focused on improving habitat for a rare moth in Michigan – the blazing star borer (*Papaipema beeriana*). We have controlled invasive plants such as common teasel, European alder, and glossy buckthorn. In 2020, we



Blazing star borer moth.
Photo by Ethan Glassman

Blacklight Survey at West Prairie.

Photo by Erin Parker



planted over 380 rough blazing stars (*Liatris spicata*) - one of the moth's blazing star host plants - to further improve habitat for the moth.

We are also working with scientists at the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) to assist with surveys for the blazing star borer and other borer moths. For the last 3 years, MNFI has conducted one night of blacklight surveys each fall at West Prairie. In 2020, 9 blazing star borers were found by MNFI. In 2021, none were recorded. And this year, at least 4 were recorded. Many other borer moths have also been recorded at West Prairie, including the indigo stem borer, the mayapple borer, and the bracken borer.

We are also working with SMLC to provide funding for a footbridge from the parking lot at West Prairie into the preserve to improve public access. And we plan to continue invasive plant control at West Prairie next year.

The partnership between TNC and SMLC has been very rewarding and we hope to continue the collaboration for many years to come.

Volunteers Wanted!

We are always looking for dedicated people who want to help SMLC achieve our mission. For more information, please contact Ethan Glassman at eglassman@smlcland.org or call 734-484-6565.



Oakland County CISMA help at Lost Lake

By Ethan Glassman, Stewardship and Outreach Specialist

Since 2017, SMLC has been a member of the Oakland County CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area), collaborating on stewardship efforts at Lost Lake Nature Preserve. Oakland County CISMA is a partnership between local governments, non-profits, and individuals working to manage invasive species across Oakland County. As members, we have received project funding to help control swallow-wort (*Vincetoxium* spp.) at Lost Lake.

Swallow-wort is an herbaceous perennial vining plant native to Europe, that was introduced to the US in the 1800s. It begins blooming in June, with small 5-petaled flowers ranging in color from pink to dark purple, that develop into milkweed-like pods in the summer, and releases fluffy white seeds in the fall. The plant is toxic to some insect species, including the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). With its vining habit and lack of natural predators, swallow wort can easily grow out of control and choke out native vegetation.



With the support of the Oakland County CISMA, SMLC has contracted the chemical treatment of swallow-wort in the southern portion of Lost Lake since 2017. With consistent control efforts, we have been able to keep the populations of swallow-wort under control, in areas where it could easily outcompete native plants.

We hope to continue to work with the Oakland County CISMA to help manage and protect the beautiful Lost Lake Nature Preserve. Collaborations like this help ensure that we can continue our mission to conserve even more land, as well as educate the community about the value of land conservation.

Lost Lake Nature Preserve.

Photo by Jerry Jourdan



Many thanks to our volunteers...

To the **Landmarks** newsletter contributors: Peter Blank, Michelle Harris, Michelle McIntyre, and William Secrest

To our **photographers**: Cathy Bach, Mark Even, Joel Geffen, Jerry Jourdan, George Kasdorf, Erin Parker, Wendy Pellerito, and Scott Tyrrell

To the **stewardship volunteers**: Aura Ahuvia, Abby Aigeltinger, Joyce Arakelian, Brenda Baker, Carla Bisaro, Jim Burck, Christopher Casillas, Umyeon Choi, Ken Ferrell, Chris Fielding, Bryan Garchar, Joel Geffen, Colby Gura, Bridget Held, George Kasdorf, Daniel Lee, Guy Marshall, Jim McIntyre, Michelle McIntyre, Bridget Neview, Johannes Postma, Cade Schaffer, David Schamberger, William Secrest, Lisa Sessa, Clark Seybert, Lindsay Vamvoudakis, Noah Vamvoudakis, Olivia Vitali, Aaron VonBargen, Bart Yeary

And especially to our dedicated **Committee Members**: Cathy Bach, Brenda Baker, Carla Bisaro, Misty Callies, Bryan Collett, Ani Cooper, Michelle Deatrick, Donald DeMallie, Mary Ericson, Craig Fields, Heidi Guenther, Colby Gura, Mike Hahn, Mitch Hall, Michelle Harris, Ruth Hart, Richard Kent, Amanda Louks, Sally Lunn, Andrew Magsam, Jim McIntyre, Michelle McIntyre, Veronica Nehasil, Tony Pitts, Jon Richards, Jim Robertson, Shawn Severance, Jack Smiley, Jonathan Trevathan, James Weiner, and Jacob Yesh-Brochstein

Thanks to everyone who volunteered with SMLC this year!

A Little Prairie with Big Potential

By Michelle McIntyre, Superior Township Chapter Committee Member

Five years ago, the Superior Township Chapter envisioned a long-term project that would increase native plant diversity, support beneficial insects, and educate the public about the relationship between the two. For the last four years, we have been hard at work making progress toward that vision. First with a Native Plant and Insect Garden (completed in 2018), and second by planting a prairie habitat (still underway). Both can be seen at the Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve.



Jack R. Smiley Prairie Planting

Photo by Cathy Bach

It could take several more years before the prairie reaches its full potential, but the land, the wildlife, and the local community have already benefited from the changes taking place. You might ask, "How?"

- The root systems of native plants run deep which helps reduce erosion, filter rainwater, and sequester carbon.
- Above ground, the plants provide food and shelter for a variety of wildlife including ground nesting birds, reptiles, insects, and invertebrates.
- The insects, in turn, benefit local agriculture by pollinating farm crops and reducing non-native or pest insect populations.

Some estimates indicate the state of Michigan has lost as much as 99% of its prairies. While only 1/3 of an acre, we are hopeful our little prairie habitat will inspire visitors to support local, state, and/or global initiatives to protect and restore prairie habitats.

SMLC's Community Organic Garden

By Michelle Harris, Garden Committee Member

I am a first-time gardener at the Conservancy Farm Community Organic Garden. I investigated several different community gardens in the area. When I visited this one in Superior Township, I knew I had found my garden. Living in a condo, I don't have a lot of space to garden. There were many reasons I wanted a community garden plot, including reducing my carbon footprint and eating and preserving food that I had grown.

I had started all my plants from seed in my basement. I choose to grow several varieties of tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers. I also tried to grow beans—twice—but I think someone else in nature snacked on them. I planted some flowers, but only the marigolds and the magnificent sunflowers survived, and I enjoyed the strawberries I inherited. While I did not have enough harvest to preserve, I grew enough vegetables that I needed a bag to carry them in every time I visited. I learned a lot in my first year of growing my own food, and I'm excited to apply what I learned next year.

Some unexpected benefits included learning so much from other gardeners and bird watchers, including the types of birds on the farm and how other gardeners became involved. The garden became my therapist; if I was stressed, I visited the garden. It helped me both mentally and physically. This experience has fed my soul so much that I asked how I could become more involved. Superior Township is lucky to have such a fantastic property. Every community should have a community garden, and I feel I have won the lottery with my garden.

If you would like to share in this garden experience we would welcome your participation. Plots are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Visit SMLC's website at smlcland.org for further information or contact the office at 734-484-6565 if you would like to reserve a garden plot for next year.



Conservation Profile: Mary Emmett

By William Secrest, SMLC Board Director

For over 34 years SMLC has been working to preserve lands and waters as living space for all the forms of life that share the world. But nature conservation is challenging. A few years ago, knowing that the task requires significant funding, our team launched the Eco-Logical Leadership Club. By joining the ELLC, conservation donors support the SMLC mission at a leadership level. Mary Emmett, owner of Plymouth Orchards and Cider Mill and the adjacent Gateway Farm is one who has stepped up to assume this level of leadership.

Mary grew up in upstate New York. She loved picking blueberries and roaming the nearby natural landscapes of rivers, marshes, and forests. After she married, Mary and her husband



Mary Emmett and William Secrest

Photo by Joel Geffen

David bought an old farm in the country between Plymouth and Ann Arbor and planted the first apple trees as a conventional orchard in 1977.

Plymouth Orchards grew into a successful venture, but after the untimely passing of her husband, she stepped back. While friends “kept the home fires burning”, she worked with Children International for three years. The charity took her to Africa and Guatemala, where she “encountered the most incredible human spirit under the most grueling of circumstances”. Returning to manage the orchards, Mary looked around her property. Much of “the country” around her had become developments and suburbs. She began to seriously consider the ideals of sustainability and resiliency, the stewardship of the land, and the legacy she might leave to the world. Over several years, she transformed her property into an organic orchard and a model of sustainable practices. She also started Gateway Farm, an organic operation growing vegetables, herbs, and flowers and selling them online and through a farmstand and a CSA (community supported agriculture) program. Mary is now working on solar panel installations to power her businesses and establishing educational programs to promote sustainable agriculture, gardens, and lifestyles.

Caring deeply about restoration and preservation, Mary was a pivotal supporter of SMLC’s Superior Township Chapter from its very beginning in 1990. Without fail, she has supported the Conservancy’s acquisitions within the Township, helping to move “vacant, for sale” land into preserved land, now known as the Superior Greenway. In Mary’s words, the Greenway is a “community commons”, a place for all the earth’s life to commune and flourish. And in her corner of Superior Township, the conserved landscapes, along with the orchards, farm, and cider mill, demonstrate how the human community can coexist with the natural world. The thousands of happy families who throng to her outfit throughout the harvest season testify to the ongoing success of her vision and hard work.

Eco-Logical Leadership Giving Club:

If you are interested in becoming an ELLC member, please contact Jill Lewis at jlewis@smlcland.org or 734-484-6565.

Summer Celebration

SMLC's 2022 Award Recipients

At SMLC's recent Summer Celebration event, we honored the following organization and individuals for their outstanding support of SMLC and local land conservation during 2022 and the past few years. Due to the pandemic we were unable to award some of these before now — we are pleased to present them now:

- **The Nature Conservancy-Ohio: *Organizational Award*** (for ongoing Sibley Prairie project funding and support)
- **Mary Ericson: *Board Award: Outgoing President*** (Term: 2017-2020)
- **Bryan Collett: *Board Award: Outgoing Director*** (for 6 or more years of continuous service)
- **Shawn Severance: *Volunteer of the Year 2022*** (Stewardship Committee Chairperson, Stewardship Support)
- **Cathy Bach: *Volunteer of the Year 2021*** (Superior Township Chapter Member, Project Leader)
- **Robert Moll: *Volunteer of the Year 2020*** (Nature Preserve Watcher, Photographer)



Summer Celebration.

Photo by Jill Lewis

Jill Lewis and Peter Blank

Photo by Joel Geffen



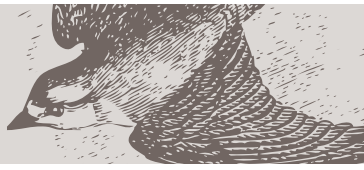
If the sight of the blue skies fills you with joy, if a blade of grass springing up in the fields has power to move you, if the simple things of nature have a message that you understand, rejoice, for your soul is alive.
~Eleonora Duse



Mary Ericson and Jim McIntyre.

Photo by Joel Geffen





Wetland Wildlife

By Ethan Glassman, Stewardship and Outreach Specialist

Wetlands play a critical role in the southeast Michigan landscape, providing a variety of ecosystem services and serving as habitat for an array of wildlife species. In SMLC's restoration efforts, what once were fallow fields have been converted into this highly productive ecosystem type. As plant communities become established, we can expect to find migratory waterfowl and mammals including great blue herons, red-winged blackbirds, sandhill cranes, and muskrat.

We also expect a variety of herpetofauna (reptiles and amphibians) to utilize this habitat as breeding and feeding grounds. In large, permanent wetlands, we are likely to see a number of frog species including green frogs (*Lithobates clamitans*) and northern leopard frogs (*Lithobates pipiens*). Western chorus frogs (*Pseudacris triseriata*) and American toads (*Anaxyrus americanus*) may be found as well. On warm, wet nights as early as mid-March, western chorus frog breeding calls can be heard, followed by

northern leopard frogs and American toads in April. Green frogs start calling in mid-May and into the summer months.

Turtles may also inhabit these wetlands, feeding on aquatic vegetation, invertebrates, small mammals, and frogs. Painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta*) will likely be found, as well as common snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*). If we're lucky, we may also see Blanding's turtles (*Emydoidea blandingii*), a species of special concern in Michigan.



Northern leopard frog.

Photo by Scott Tyrrell

Continued from page 1

Through the years, we have gradually increased and improved the public access amenities at our nature preserves. These include but are not limited to: parking areas, public trails, and visitor kiosks and signage. In fact, when SMLC acquires new nature preserves, we ensure that funding is available for initial public access infrastructure.

Therefore, SMLC is pleased to announce that we are constructing a public parking lot, establishing a new trailhead and installing new signage at the Secrest Nature Preserve in Superior Township, Washtenaw County. When the parking lot is completed, the trailhead to the public hiking trail will begin at the parking area and visitors will no longer park along Berry Road nor access the trail from the road. There will also be a new "marquee" sign along Ford Road.

SMLC is also constructing a new footbridge, establishing a new trailhead and installing new signage at the Sibley Prairie Nature Preserve – West Prairie site in Brownstown Township, Wayne County. This footbridge will route the public hiking trail from the parking lot into the preserve and the marquee

sign will be located along West Road.

These new public amenities (anticipated by early November 2022) should increase preserve user's safety and enjoyment of these preserves and hopefully encourage more residents and visitors to get out in nature too.



Get Email Updates from SMLC



Don't miss out on the latest Conservancy news, events, and announcements. If your address has changed, be sure to let us know that too.

To sign up, please send an email to: info@smlcland.org

Yes! I want to help preserve critical natural habitat in southeast Michigan by supporting Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy.

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All donations are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. The donor received no goods or services in exchange for this donation. E-mail used only for SMLC news/announcements. We will never give or sell your personal information to any other group.

Our Mission *The Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy conserves natural land and open space - including forests, wetlands, meadows, agricultural lands, and places of scenic beauty - to provide habitat for wildlife and to enrich the lives of people.*

Wish List

SMLC could use the following items:

Item Needed	Retail Cost
3 point hitch tractor wood chipper attachment	\$2,500
Fire Safety Equipment	\$1,100
Good working order black and white Business Printer	\$250
Heavy-duty poster easels (2)	\$150
Pack of leather gloves for volunteers	\$100
Vernal pool monitoring kits	\$75 each
Bottled water for thirsty volunteers (24 pack)	\$4 each

Please contact the SMLC office if you would like to make our wishes come true!

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