



Superior Township Chapter

Update

Preserving the rural character and natural habitats of Superior Township

Summer 2023



Early Morning Fog Over LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve

Photo by Charles Scott

Lending a Hand to Save the Land

By Bill Secrest, Chapter Steering Committee Co-Chair

With this rousing call, we are celebrating SMLC's 35th year. 2023 also marks the 35th year that my beautiful wife, Misty, and I have lived in Superior Township, sharing our Stray Dog Farm with dozens of volunteer dogs and cats that have shown up out here at the edge of town. As with others living in Superior Township, geography determined our choice. I taught Religious Studies at Henry Ford College in Dearborn while Misty served as a chef in Oakland County, and later in Ann Arbor. We both love the open countryside. We've been working on our old farmstead all these years, enlarging the vegetable garden, adding a small orchard, designing flower beds, and fostering a tallgrass prairie dotted with oak trees. We work hard, always trying to maintain our property as a beautiful place where people and nature coexist in a healthy, sustainable balance.

see **Lending**, page 7

Tried and True

Remedy for All That Ails You

By Brenda Baker, Chapter Steering Committee Co-Chair

Climate change. Mass shootings. The war in Ukraine. Emerging from the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. There's so much to deal with globally.

Road construction. Wildfire smoke from Canada. Back to the office after working from home. A controversial rezoning request. So much to deal with locally.

...And then there's nature. I'm sitting at a table on my back deck as I write this. A

see **Remedy**, page 3

A Look Inside

Get Involved	pg 2
Discoveries	pg 3
Local Efforts	pg 4
Salamanders	pg 7

Update

A newsletter published by:

Superior Township Chapter

of
Southeast Michigan
Land Conservancy



*...Preserving the rural
character
and natural habitats of
Superior Township*

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Your Turn

By Bill Secrest, Chapter Steering Committee Co-Chair

With profound gratitude and best wishes, we announce the departure of two of our most beloved, dedicated, and skilled Superior Township Chapter (STC) Steering Committee members.

Cathy Bach, a retired Ecology Professor at EMU, has served on our chapter steering committee for 7 fruitful years. Married to Brian Hazlett, a UofM marine biologist, she has traveled the globe visiting and studying endangered ocean coral reefs. Long a supporter of the big conservation organizations, Cathy wanted to get her hands in the dirt. She successfully wrote grant applications to the Michigan Botanical Foundation and Ann Arbor Farm and Garden to plan and plant a native plant and insect garden and a nearby prairie installation at the entrance to the Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve. This is just across the road from our Township Hall. The garden/prairie is becoming a place of great beauty as well as providing education about our immediate environment. No native plants?—No native pollinators. No ecosystem?—No us!



Cathy Bach

When her children were young, Michelle McIntyre and her husband, Jim, loved taking them on escapades in our local preserves—off the screens, out of the rat race, into the healing balm of nature. Her family so enjoyed these sojourns that Michelle felt compelled to give back so that future generations might share similar delights. Michelle's profession is assisting early childhood centers all across the nation. She and, Jim, now the illustrious President of SMLC, have provided special youth-focused workshops over the years: bug hunts, bird box building, and other hands-on learnings. Michelle has been on our chapter steering committee



Michelle McIntyre

see **Turn**, page 6



Remedy, cont'd from pg 1

cool summer breeze will soon bring rain. My backyard is hardly a nature preserve, but the trees and the birds and the fresh air are still rather cleansing, dropping my tension down a few notches.

As the pandemic winds down, the Superior Township Chapter is able to resume a full slate of our recurring activities and add a new one (see *A Full Year in the Superior Greenway* on page 6).

Already this year, the Chapter has hosted these regular events:

- Winter Walkabout hike at LeFurge Woods (February)
- Spring has Sprung at Springhill hike (April)
- Native Plant and Insect Garden / Prairie Workday at Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve (June)

We also represented SMLC at Washtenaw County's Native Plant Expo and Marketplace and had a booth at the Township's Superior Day – both in June. And we are (obviously) now preparing our summer newsletter.

Next up will be the Midsummer Greenway Delight (hike) on August 13th, including three partners (SMLC, Washtenaw County, and Superior Township) on three adjoining parks/preserves. We will round out the rest of the year by hosting a Full Moon Campfire in September and the Autumn Spectacular (hike) in October. (See pages 5 and 6 for more information about remaining Chapter / SMLC events in Superior Township this year.)

Every one of these activities gets me outside and away from my responsibilities and to-dos. It immerses me in another world for a couple of hours. My backyard belongs to me (though I can't take credit for the trees or the birds or the wind), but this world of public outdoor spaces belongs to all of us. Don't forget to take advantage of it.

Superior Township Chapter Update

Voyage of Discovery

By Mark Higbee, Chapter Steering Committee

About 22 years ago, I took my twin sons on a hike in the LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve, our first time at LeFurge. It was a voyage of discovery: my youngsters, about 4 years old, learned to walk on an elevated boardwalk above mud, heard many bird calls, and saw big birds hunting fish in the ponds and smaller birds darting above us, eating insects. We saw a muskrat house! Soon after we turned west, following the path, we saw a sudden flash of white—we had startled a white-tailed deer. It was out of sight in an instant. My son said, "That was the first deer I've seen in the wild." His brother said zoos aren't as natural as the wild.

That was an adventure of exploration for my young family. The boys told their mom about the drama of our hike. We often returned to LeFurge. LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve was created by volunteers, and it has grown in size since our first visit. We are grateful. If you want other families and their children to have the opportunity for such journeys of discovery, volunteer to help the Superior Township Chapter of SMLC grow. Doing so is fun and rewarding--I know it is.



Nodding Trillium

Photo by Wendy Pellerito

The Community Organic Garden is a Magical Place!

By *Amanda Louks, SMLC Community Organic Garden Committee Member*

When I first stumbled upon this local treasure, I was beyond excited. My condo association did not approve my request to create vegetable gardening space on the property. They said it was a great idea but not great timing. This disappointing decision led me to search online for shared garden space and that's when I found the SMLC Community Organic Garden, and only 15 minutes from my home.

Every time I walk out to the garden to work the soil, sow some seeds, or water the plants, I feel nature's magic. There are many different birds flitting about including Sandhill Cranes, which I've never seen in a flock before; hummingbirds, red-winged blackbirds, and many, many more. You never know what you will find or experience, and this makes every visit to the garden an adventure. I've also met some wonderful people in the garden.

This borrowed garden space is my sanctuary. I go early in the morning to soak in the quiet sounds of nature. Sometimes I sit and meditate or just gaze over the beautiful meadow. It is a place that nourishes my mental and physical health at the same time. It is truly a magical place!



Garden Bounty

Photo by Charles Scott

Prairie Progress in the Preserve

By *Carla Bisaro and Cathy Bach*

Over the last two years, the Superior Township Chapter has begun to transform the area at the entry to the Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve into a Midwest prairie. We have completed the initial work, but the process still requires an exceptional amount of work and time.

After herbiciding the site, we sowed seeds and transplanted plugs of 47 species of native prairie plants into the area. We have also diminished some of the unwelcome (non-native) species, with a notable reduction in wild carrot (Queen Anne's Lace), but now are faced with an overgrowth of clover. It has been suggested that we hire a herd of buffalo to graze the field, but that is not in the realm of reality! Although prescribed burns are often used in prairie management, our best option is a regular mowing plan. With regular mowing (which started in early June), we will discourage the growth of invasive species, but not harm the native prairie plants that have the ability to regrow because they are accustomed to grazing.

We have been pleased to find, even within the overgrowth of clover, many examples of native plants that we have introduced in our "prairie." On one quick look in early June, we found Golden Alexander, Cranesbill Geranium, and Cutleaf Coneflower popping up through the clover. We know that the things we've introduced are still there!

A volunteer workday was recently held on June 24 to transplant extra plants from our Native Plant and Insect Garden into the prairie. We'll keep you informed of our process and our progress.

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



Message from SMLC

By Jim McIntyre, SMLC Board President

As SMLC marks its 35th Anniversary, this is a great opportunity to look back and appreciate everything that the organization has been able to accomplish. While it's great to celebrate the successes of the past, we should temper that celebration with an eye toward the future. What does the next 35 years look like? What will it take for SMLC to be successful in the future, and how can you help? The way I see it, we need three things to grow the organization: people, funding, and opportunities.

First, and most importantly, we're nothing without our people. Our staff efficiently manages our day-to-day operations, which can prove to be a great deal of work. We also rely heavily on volunteers—not just for physical labor, but also to support the staff and augment our professional, scientific, and administrative capacity. We are part of a talented, diverse community and you can help by recommending SMLC to your friends and neighbors as they look for ways to get involved locally.

As an organization, everything we do boils down to acquiring and managing land. We spend a great deal of time and effort working to secure funding for current operations and for future growth. Fundraising is hardly ever easy, and it requires active participation, making it a critical component of our success. Are you familiar with any funding opportunities or programs that would fit SMLC's mission? We'd like to hear about them.

Lastly, we must be able to identify acquisition opportunities and be prepared to help protect land when these opportunities present themselves. This requires planning, but it also means that we must be consistently working at expanding our network of contacts

to be sure that people who are considering protecting their property know who we are and can find us early in their decision-making process. Are you (or someone you know) concerned about how you can protect your land for future generations to enjoy? We'd love to learn about how you envision that land being used in the future.

How do we make the most of the next 35 years? We do it by engaging with our community; by making sure that we connect with people who want to see us succeed and who are willing to get involved to help make that happen. Thank you all for your support over the last 35 years. I hope you'll join us as we work even harder to make the next 35 years a success!



Upcoming Events

Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy in Superior Township

August 13 Sunday 1:30pm – 4:00pm	Midsummer Greenway Delight Nature Walk Secret Nature Preserve, 3702 Berry Rd., Superior Twp.
September 30 Saturday 6:00pm – 9:00pm	Full Moon Campfire <i>Hosted by the Superior Township Chapter</i> LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve 2252 N. Prospect Rd., Superior Twp.
October 22 Sunday 1:30pm – 3:45pm	Autumn Spectacular Nature Walk Location TBD Superior Twp.
October 28 Saturday 6:00pm – 9:30pm	SMLC Red Barn Bash—Tickets \$100 each. For more information, email info@smlcland.org , or visit smlcland.org

A Full Year in the Superior Greenway

By Carla Bisaro, Superior Township Chapter Steering Committee

For decades, the Superior Township Chapter has hosted nature walks in two of the Superior Greenway preserves – the Spring Has Sprung at Springhill event in the Springhill Nature Preserve and the Autumn Spectacular event typically held at the LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve. Now, after a long Covid hiatus, we're back to hosting these events at Superior Greenway preserves.

This year, our parent organization, SMLC, requested that we adopt the responsibility for their historic February Winter Walkabout. The event went off without a hitch, and we have agreed to the ongoing responsibility for the event at the LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve.



Conservancy Farm at Sunset

Photo by Wendy Pellerito

And now, in celebration of SMLC's 35th birthday, we announce our first summer event: the Midsummer Greenway Delight! The Sunday, August 13th event will focus on the participating partners that have enabled the protection of the varied preserves in the Superior

Greenway. We will begin at SMLC's Secret Nature Preserve and enter a trail that will continue on through the Weatherbee Woods Preserve of Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation and then

see **Year**, page 8

Turn, cont'd from pg 2

for nine years while also serving on the SMLC Events Committee, where she helps plan our shindigs such as the fabulous biennial "Red Barn Bash." She also works with Cathy, long-time steering committee member Carla Bisaro, SMLC Stewards, and other volunteers to maintain the native plant and insect garden and prairie across from the Township Hall.

And while Cathy and Michelle are stepping away from our local chapter steering committee, you'll still see them both helping out at the meadow and at other Superior Township activities.

I must also send a "shout out" to Colby Gura, a research scientist at UofM, who served our committee graciously in 2021-2022, educating us about vernal pools and compiling last year's newsletter among other contributions ... Thanks, Colby! Lastly, a hearty welcome to Mark Higbee, a history professor at EMU, who has just saddled up with our preservation posse this past year. Great to have you with us, Mark.

If you or someone you know wants to join in our efforts to preserve the wilds, please get in touch. This work is good for the soul, and we are a lot of fun as well!



Salamander Hunt

By Joan Martin

I love to watch wild animals going about their business. Since I rarely get a chance to watch salamanders, I signed up immediately for the SMLC spring salamander walk led by naturalist Ethan Glassman. It was a great choice!



**A spotted salamander
hiding in the leaf litter**

Photo by Ethan Glassman

We met at dusk on a warm, rainy night at the parking lot of the LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve. Everyone introduced themselves, and we set off to walk what seemed to me a very long distance (after a long day of other activities). When we finally arrived at a vernal pond, we needed our flashlights to search in the water and on the wet ground but were unable to find any salamanders. By then it was quite dark and getting late, but I was the only one who voted against walking further to check another pond. Thank heavens, I was voted down.

Perhaps it was the rain and perhaps it was just a different pond, but we were treated to many, many salamanders walking under the water and leaves and each other. Their bright yellow spots made them easy to see. As we looked further, we found another species there with almost invisible blue spots. When we finally left to start home, we had to be careful, because salamanders were now walking on our path.

In spite of my falling on the muddy logs, it was a wonderful experience! I am deeply grateful to SMLC for providing such a knowledgeable guide and delightful experience.

Superior Township Chapter Update

Lending, cont'd from pg 1

Last year I was invited to join our Township Board of Trustees. Wow! As a “born again” country boy, I had been concentrating on land conservation work. As a Trustee, though, I work on behalf of the entire Superior Township community. We have several subdivisions, some wealthy and others disadvantaged, as well as the farmers and rural folk. But one of our township’s greatest assets that benefits all is our Superior Greenway—a vast stretch of contiguous natural lands and farmlands that provide sanctuary for wildlife and people alike. The Greenway is a gift that everyone—rich and poor, black and white, young and old, conservative and liberal—can use, enjoy, and revel in. While the township’s location between multiple municipalities creates many pressures, issues that I, as a township Trustee, must attend to, the Greenway remains an expression of our citizens’ passion for the preservation of our Township’s rural character.

We still do not know one
thousandth of one percent of
what nature has revealed to us.

—Albert Einstein

Currently, SMLC is engaged in acquiring accreditation from the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission. It’s an institution that guides conservancies in maintaining the highest standards and practices to ensure institutional integrity. Becoming accredited is an acknowledgment of SMLC’s work to cement the organizational structures and policies that will safeguard our work going long into the future.

Our local chapter of SMLC has been at this for more than three decades now. If you share this vision and would like to help out more, please step up to the plate and lend a hand to save the land!

Summer 2023

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

\$ _____ Total Gift

Check here to let SMLC use my gift where it is needed most.

Or, direct my donation:

\$ _____ Stewardship Fund

\$ _____ Superior Township Fund

\$ _____ Land Protection Fund

\$ _____ Stewardship Endowment Fund

Please make checks payable to Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy and mail to:

Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy
8383 Vreeland Rd.
Superior Township, MI 48198

Or, make a secure online credit card donation at www.smlcland.org

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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.*

Year, cont'd from pg 6

into Superior Township's Schroeter Park before looping back to the start. We will follow our traditional schedule of a 1:30 pm gathering and 2:00 pm trail entry, concluding by 4:00 pm.

We hope to make it an annual addition to the nature walk series. Each succeeding Midsummer Greenway Delight event would occur at a different preserve of the Superior Greenway, so that we would have a full complement of seasonal walks in the Greenway. We invite you to join us on our maiden summer event and help us celebrate SMLC's 35th birthday and the Superior Greenway.

For further information, contact Brenda at bakerpartin@aol.com or Bill at 734-482-5957.

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