The Intrinsic Value of Protecting Land

By Taylor Myatt, Stewardship and Outreach Specialist

I entered the quiet Conservancy Farmhouse early one winter morn and opened the window shades to embrace the warmth gracing the earth from the eastern sky as light rays raced toward the fresh white powder on the prairie with singular intent. I peered out at the feeders for my daily count of tree sparrows and juncos, but in an instant their numbers dispersed in all directions to nearby cover as the shadow of their demise darted across my line of sight—a Cooper’s Hawk had arrived for breakfast.

If you’re reading this, you probably value land conservation to some degree, and likely for a multitude of reasons. Here I’m referring to natural and open land, along with its connections to nature and the environment around us. Land has many values: cultural, economic, recreational, historic, scientific, agricultural, social, intrinsic, and the list goes on. I want to focus on land’s intrinsic value because to fully appreciate nature, we must come to see it as objectively good in and of itself, regardless of what it can offer mankind. To do this, we need

“Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language.”

- Aldo Leopold
The benefits of nature are personal, intrinsic, and support the communities we live, work and play in. Nature is all around us and yet, it can easily be taken for granted. This is the case of America’s rapidly diminishing grassland habitat or “prairie”. Although most people do not think of Michigan as a prairie state, it once was home to more than 16,000 acres with the majority of that located in southern Michigan.

Scientists have shown that loss of grassland habitat is the main factor in declining grassland species. Although a species in decline has not yet reached the level of rare or endangered, they are on their way unless we do something to stop that downward trend. Besides providing habitat for dependent species, grassland is beneficial for us too. According to a 2014 Penn State study, “Grasslands, especially in agricultural landscapes, also provide tremendous benefits to humans through erosion reduction and water filtration…”

Closer to home, and as initially shared in the Fall 2017 issue of Landmarks, SMLC has changed our land management approach to our Conservancy Farm property. This was due to repeated sightings last summer of several grassland bird species including Bobolinks and the State endangered Henslow’s Sparrow. We are now managing the fallow fields to support grassland bird habitat. According to J. Franklin Egan, research ecologist, USDA-Agricultural Research Service, who worked on the Penn State study noted above, “Grasslands are easily converted to farmland for row crops, such as corn and soybeans. Grassland species, with few exceptions, cannot survive on these intensive agricultural lands.”

SMLC is also restoring a rare wet prairie at our Sibley Prairie Nature Preserve-West Prairie site and promoting grassland habitat at our Lost Lake Nature Preserve thanks to funding and assistance from our project partners: Ducks Unlimited, the Michigan DNR, The Nature Conservancy, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

We are grateful for their help with this important stewardship work and to our 2017 funders, sponsors, and donors who supported our annual operations. SMLC offers deep appreciation to the James A. and Faith Knight Foundation and the Eco-Logical Leadership Club (ELLC) members, whose generous gifts are paving the way for a sustainable SMLC. See pages 4-7 for the 2017 Annual Report and page 3 to save the date for SMLC’s fun Red Barn Bash later this year.

This issue celebrates nature’s intrinsic value. Sometimes we need to pause and reflect that nature is worthy of saving in and of itself. Thank you for being part of SMLC’s journey to do so.
SMLC Receives Governmental Funding for Preserve Restoration

By Jill A. Lewis, Executive Director

Last year SMLC received grant awards from the federal North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) for significant land restoration projects. This year these grant funds and an anticipated new MDNR grant continue to fund this important work.

The Lost Lake Nature Preserve Grassland and Wetlands Restoration Project: this project seeks to promote grassland habitat at two sites on the preserve (Genesee/Oakland counties) including the prairie “runway” area where the public trail is located, and to enhance a large natural wetland located outside of public view. Total anticipated project funds will be close to $25,000 from NAWCA, MDNR, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the project manager. Ducks Unlimited secured the NAWCA funding through a much larger grant project and is the grants manager.

The Sibley Prairie Nature Preserve-West Prairie Restoration Project: this project seeks to restore the ecologically rare Lakeplain prairie habitat at West Prairie that is located within the larger historic Sibley Prairie (Wayne County). In 2017 and 2018, the restoration efforts are building on the work that The Nature Conservancy (TNC) conducted in 2015 to improve this native prairie landscape. Total project funds are more than $12,500 from MDNR and TNC is the project contractor.

See page 10 for a current update on both projects.

SMLC’s Red Barn Bash Goes to Detroit!

"Under the Spell of Nature"

Save the Date!

Date: Saturday, October 27, 2018
Time: 6-9:30 pm
Place: MDNR Outdoor Nature Center, Detroit
       (located on the Detroit River, next to Milliken State Park and the RiverWalk)
Ticket Price: $75 each

Join SMLC and friends as we celebrate Creatures, Costumes and Conservation in Detroit! Our biannual Red Barn Bash is always a good time with delicious food, fun entertainment and a celebration of local conservation accomplishments. You can help SMLC make this year’s event a spooktacular success. Please plan to join the party, dressed up in your favorite costume (optional), and invite your friends! Corporate sponsorships are available and appreciated. Please contact Jill Lewis at jlewis@smlcland.org for more information.
The Year in Review
By Mary Ericson, SMLC Board President

Happy Spring!! As I look back on last year and forward to the new one, I am excited about the many changes we are making as an organization. The Board, in particular, has been busy adopting and updating policies that will better enable us to govern. With the help of an expert consultant and the support of our fearless Executive Director, Jill Lewis, the Board worked tirelessly in all of 2017 and will continue throughout 2018 to make SMLC a more mature organization.

In addition to governance policy improvements, the Board is also assisting SMLC in achieving Accreditation with the Land Trust Alliance. A team of our three newest Board Directors – Jim McIntyre, Mitch Hall and Don DeMallie – are helping Jill, the Board and Committees keep on track to readying us to submit our application in 2019. Accreditation will raise SMLC’s profile among land conservancies, opening the door to many opportunities that will help us in our ultimate goal of preserving more land in southeast Michigan.

We had several changes to the Board and Committees in 2017. Bill Secrest became our Vice-President and Michelle Andrzejak joined the Executive Committee. Jim Weiner and Richard Kent traded places, with Richard taking over as Secretary and Jim taking over as Chair of the Land Protection Committee. And 2017 was my first year as President.

But we didn’t spend all of our time indoors! The Board was involved with a number of SMLC activities in 2017. Nearly all Board Directors took part in the Winter Walkabout last February, where we were guided on a hike through the LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve. It was a great opportunity to view the preserve in its dormant state and to be shown natural features that aren’t as visible the rest of the year.

In late September, the Board hosted a Full Moon Campfire, again at LeFurge Woods. With the campfire located near the entrance to the LeFurge Woods trails, many went for an early evening hike and ended their day with s’mores at the fire. This was my first SMLC campfire and I really enjoyed sharing the peacefulness and beauty of our land with fellow “campers”.

In the fall, we held a brunch for our ELLC members. The ELLC, or Eco-Logical Leadership Club, is for donors who make an annual unrestricted gift at the $1,000 level. The Board spearheads this effort, maintaining regular contact with donors and hosting a few special events for Club members every year. Our brunch was graciously hosted by Kurt and Maura Jung at their lovely home near the Lost Lake Nature Preserve. While the uncertainty of the weather that day caused us to cancel the planned hike at the preserve, the Jungs generously gave us a guided tour of their extensive rural property. An unanticipated perk for our ELLC members!

I’m looking forward to more activities in 2018, including several ELLC events to be announced as well as our flagship fundraising event – the Red Barn Bash. (This year sans red barn because we are moving to Detroit!) The Board is committed to building upon its 2017 achievements to create a better future for SMLC in 2018 and beyond!
SMLC Welcomes New Leadership in 2017

Please join SMLC in welcoming the following new committee members as they assist the Board and Staff in achieving our goals:

Kyle Peczynski joined the Land Protection Committee last spring. He has a law degree from Wayne State University and a background in energy financing. Kyle has a strong desire to help SMLC with our land protection efforts. In addition, Jonathan Trevathan – an SMLC Board Director – also joined the Committee.

Ani Cooper and Jacob Yesh-Brochstein, two University of Michigan-Dearborn students, joined the Stewardship Committee last summer bringing fresh energy, GIS/Mapping skills, and current academic knowledge to the group. In addition, Jim McIntyre – an SMLC Board Director – also joined the Committee.

Cathy Bach, a Professor Emeritus in Biology at Eastern Michigan University, joined the Superior Township Chapter Steering Committee this past summer. Cathy has a PhD in Biological Sciences from the University of Michigan and a lifelong interest in conservation.

David Ladomer (M.S. Accounting, University of Michigan-Dearborn), Tony Pitts (MBA, Wayne State University) and Diane Schwarzkopf (B.S. Business Administration, University of Central Florida) joined the Finance Committee this past December bringing a wealth of financial knowledge including experience with nonprofit finances, and strong interest in protecting local outdoor places. In addition, we said goodbye last summer, with much appreciation, to longstanding member David Wible.

### 2017 Financial Report

- **Revenue** $247,724*
  - Program Income 1%
  - Fund Transfers 25%
  - In-Kind Donations 2%
  - Investment Income 15%
  - Contributions 56%
  - Event Revenue 1%

- **Expenses** $226,510*
  - Land Protection 60%
  - Mktg/Outreach 12%
  - Fundraising 6%
  - Depreciation 5%
  - Mgmt. & General 17%

* unaudited
Thank You
for supporting our Mission in 2017!

The Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy extends appreciation to all of our generous donors. Your 2017 contributions made it possible for SMLC to continue to protect and preserve natural lands and open space in southeast Michigan.

We apologize for any errors and omissions. If something is incorrect please let us know.

**Gifts from Foundations & Organizations**

$25,000 and up
- Anonymous

$5,000 - $24,999
- Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan – Fred G. & Stephanie Secrest Fund
- James A. & Faith Knight Foundation

$1,000 - $4,999
- International Transmissions Company (ITC)
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources

$500 - $999
- King & MacGregor Environmental, Inc.

$1 - $499
- Amazon Smile Foundation
- Boisvenu & Company, P.C.
- Byway Creative
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- Country Garden Club of Northville
- Couzens Lansky, P.C.
- Howard B. and Nina Dodge Abrams Philanthropic Fund
- Kroger Community Rewards
- Microsoft Matching Gift Program

**Gifts from Individuals**

$500 - $999
- Bob & Carla Bisaro
- Brian Carroll
- Bryan Collett
- Bill Craig
- Donald DeMallie
- Mary Ericson
- Bryan Garchar
- Art & Marion Gold
- Dan & Jane Hayes
- Anna Holden
- Helen Jeter
- Richard Kent
- Patsy Knoop
- Eric & Monica Malloy
- Joanna Pease
- Elvera & David Shappirio

$500 - $999
- Bill Browning
- Carolyn Buell
- Paul & Linda Burger
- Jim & Denise Burrows
- Hal & Kathy Buttermore
- Maurice & Delwyn Callies
- Julia Caroff
- Paul & Pat Carson
- Barbara Carter
- Virginia Catanese
- Dick & Sue Chase
- Barbara Cheger
- Yipeng Chen & Lei Weng
- Jesse & Juanita Christian
- Larry Clayton
- Stephen & Carole Cook
- Roger Corpolongo & Ela Jiga
- John & Marcia Covert
- James & June Coyne
- Philip Crookshank
- Cheryl Cunningham & William Mathewson
- Rane Curl
- Elisabeth Daumer
- Eva Deck
- Monte & Kristen Del Monte
- Mary Dennison & Rick Humesky
- Bob & Amy Doyle
- Carol Dubuke
- Robert Duchene
- Marc Edelstein
- Jim Edwards
- Michael Elliott & Amy Lesemann
- Eric & Vivian Ellsworth
- Margaret Engle & Gavin Clabaugh
- Denice Erley
- Daniel & Martina Ezekiel
- Susan Falcone & Tom McClanahan
- Peter & Mary Fales
- Wayne Fisher
- Dave Flak
- Rod & Karen Folland
- Lorne & Sara Forstner
- Dick Fortune
- LaMar & Carol Frederick

- Pfizer Foundation Matching Gifts Program
- Wolverine Engineers and Surveyors
-Anonymous

- William Secrest & Misty Callies **ELLC**

- **$1,000 - $4,999**
- Chris & Michelle Andrzejak **ELLC**
- Sean Cronin **ELLC**
- Mary Emmett **ELLC**
- Jeffrey & Marilyn Gilbert **ELLC**
- Mitch & Lori Hall **ELLC**
- Jeffery Hannah & Nur Akcasu
- Kurt & Maura Jung **ELLC**
- George & Nancy Kasdorf
- Gerard & Rose Matuszak
- Tim & Traci Myatt
- Bill Phillips & Marianne Udowycki
- Ralph & Barbara Powell **ELLC**
- James Reynolds **ELLC**
- Ann Robbins **ELLC**
- Jim & Pat Robertson
- Steve & Darlene Secrest **ELLC**
- Bonita Singal **ELLC**
- Brad Tomtishen & Lynda Oswald **ELLC**
- Jonathan & Katie Trevathan **ELLC**
- Craig Tyler Anderson & PGE Matching Gift Program
- Lois-Jean Urich
- John Woollam **ELLC**
- Anonymous

- **$500 - $999**
- Bill Browning
- Carolyn Buell
- Paul & Linda Burger
- Jim & Denise Burrows
- Hal & Kathy Buttermore
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- Wayne Fisher
- Dave Flak
- Rod & Karen Folland
- Lorne & Sara Forstner
- Dick Fortune
- LaMar & Carol Frederick

- $1 - $499
- Nabeel & Lisa Abraham
- Jessica Adamczyk
- Joseph & Deborah Aho
- Stephen Aiello
- John, Allison & Julia Miller
- Charles & Roberta Anderson
- Doris Applebaum
- Eric & Pat Appleberry
- Joyce Arakelian
- Tom, Rosemary & Jordon Assenmacher
- Christian Avasilcai
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- Paul & Nancy Bailey
- Brenda Baker
- Robert & Rosalind Barnsdale
- Deborah Bayer
- Juliet Berger
- Ramona Bertrand
- Meghan Bonfiglio
- Patricia Brandon
- John Brinley & Anne Schott

- Bill Browning
- Carolyn Buell
- Paul & Linda Burger
- Jim & Denise Burrows
- Hal & Kathy Buttermore
- Maurice & Delwyn Callies
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- Rod & Karen Folland
- Lorne & Sara Forstner
- Dick Fortune
- LaMar & Carol Frederick

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Memorial Donations

In Memory of Jean Bushey
By Lynn & Doris Ehrle

In Memory of Betty Ritzenhein
By Florence Gasdick

In Memory of Paul Trojan
By Joe & Lori Hymes

In Memory of Roland and Dorothy Mundle
By Gary & Valerie Przywara

In Memory of Lionel Guregian
By Thomas Jacobs, Michael Jenkins, Julie Capra, Theodore Witte, Steve & Darlene Secrest, Pamela Greve

ELLC Eco-Logical Leadership Club
The Loss and Wonder of Prairie Grasslands

By Shawn Severence, Naturalist for the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission

Prior to colonization, the North American heartland was an endless sea of rippling grass. Within it, a single herd of bison could easily contain over 1 million animals and take a man 6 days to pass through. These vast grasslands arose in the rain shadow of the Rocky Mountains, unfolded over the hills and valleys of the Midwest, raced across the black earth of Indiana and paused to stretch up into lower Michigan where the glaciers had left gravelly soil. Everything about the prairie was immense, “On the summit levels spreads the wide prairie, decked with flowers of the gayest hue; its long and undulating waves stretching away till sky and meadow mingle in the distant horizon”. – DD Owens, exploring geologist, 1848.

In 1837, a blacksmith named John Deere invented the steel moldboard plow. This new tool spelled the end of the prairie. At an astonishing pace, big bluestem and Indian grass (iconic prairie species) were tilled under and replaced with wheat and corn. It was said that cutting the powerful roots of prairie plants sounded like a volley of pistol shots. Prairie conversion unfortunately reached a dizzying pace during the dust bowl era. It could be told where the dust storms came from by the color of the soil - black soil came from Kansas, red soil came from Oklahoma, and gray soil came from Colorado and New Mexico. Where prairie plants had once held valuable soil together, soil was literally blowing away.

Today, what remains of the prairie is confined to small, isolated reserves and the vast herds of bison are no more. We have lost over 99.9% of our prairie grasslands in the Midwest – enough that The Nature Conservancy considers temperate grasslands the most endangered ecosystem in the world. The prairie remnants that remain are well worth seeking out, however. They are quiet with the harmony of ancient, tiny creatures that have lived in close connection for millennia. Monarch butterflies, bumblebees, hummingbird moths, grasshoppers, ground-dwelling reptiles and raptors of the sky, all in a timeless balance.

Many prairie animals have been able to persist because they were able to shift to fallow agricultural fields. While the fallow field grass species are different – cool season European pasture grasses like Timothy, Orchardgrass and Kentucky Bluegrass – the open, sunny habitat structure is similar. A short hike through an old field or hedgerow, especially one with flowers, is filled with small wonders and echoes of the once endless North American Prairie.
Many Thanks...

To the **Landmarks** newsletter guest writers: Mary Ericson, Jim McIntyre, Shawn Severance, and Jack Smiley.

To the volunteers who have helped with our **mailings**: Carla Bisaro, Jeffrey Gilbert, George Kasdorf, and Nancy Kasdorf.

To the **community tabling and other event** volunteers: Cathy Bach, Carla Bisaro, Marilyn Gilbert, and Rick Simek.

To our **photography** volunteers: Dave Amamoto, Laura Bien, Eva Deck, Mark Even, Jolene Knapp, Jim Robertson, Corey Seeman, and Luke Tracy.

To the **stewardship** volunteers: Jessica Adamczyk, Nikita Ajmera, Joyce Arakelian, Carla Bisaro, Rachel Bisaro, Aidan Blum, Doug Boyce, Karl Brenner, Eva Deck, Mary Emmett, Mark Even, Milton French, Ben Higdon, George Kasdorf, Ashley Nebel, Kyle Peczynski, Tony Pitts, and Amanda Santiago for their work with a myriad of stewardship tasks.

A special thanks to the **Chrysler Fiat** crew led by **Danielle Devlin** of **Six Rivers Land Conservancy** that helped clear trails at our Lost Lake Nature Preserve last fall, and also to the **Dixboro United Methodist Church** crew who did great work at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve!

Thanks to everyone who volunteered with SMLC this year!

We are always looking for dedicated people to help SMLC achieve our mission. For more information about volunteering, please contact Taylor Myatt at tmyatt@smlcland.org or call 734-484-6565.

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**Native Pollinator Garden at Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve**

*By Jim McIntyre, Superior Township Chapter Steering Committee Member and SMLC Board Director*

Recently, the Superior Township Chapter of SMLC decided to take on a new local initiative: working to maintain the Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve by hosting stewardship and volunteer workday events. Headlining our efforts will be our work to create a native plant garden at the main preserve entrance. The goal of this project, which will begin in June, is to restore native, local plant genotypes into an area that has been missing these species for generations, creating a sustainable habitat for the insects and wildlife that thrive in this type of environment.

This type of work isn’t completed quickly. The Chapter put in a great deal of work securing funding, selecting appropriate species for the best results, and coordinating volunteers to assist with the clearing, planting, and maintenance of the site. Ultimately, we hope to use this project as a template for other SMLC preserves, reintroducing native species to areas where they’ve struggled to survive...adding diversity and sustainability to areas which desperately need our intervention.

This type of work isn’t easy, so why devote the time and resources to make it happen? Because this land has value; not simply a monetary price tag, but value in its mere existence that makes it worth preserving and protecting. Knowing that we’re positively impacting the land and that our efforts will enhance our local open spaces for future generations is its own reward.

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**2018 Garden Plots Available**

Spring is here and it’s time to sign-up for a garden plot in SMLC’s Community Organic Garden at the Conservancy Farm. For more information, please contact Garden Coordinator Jack Smiley at jackrsmiley@gmail.com

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**Black-eyed Susan**  
*Photo by Corey Seeman*
Restoration Update
By Taylor Myatt, Stewardship and Outreach Specialist

Many of you know by now that SMLC has been conducting significant habitat restoration work at our Lost Lake and Sibley Prairie – West Prairie nature preserves. These multiyear projects are not yet complete, but here’s an update on their status...

At Lost Lake in Oakland County, we’ve been improving 15 acres of savanna and restoring a 9 acre wetland. Last Fall, the degraded grassland was full of invasive shrubs, but some heavy machinery made quick work of that this winter, leaving the wood chips and natural debris you may be seeing out there right now. After chemical treatment of the re-sprouts this summer, we’ll be planting native Michigan flora next spring. There is also a wetland that was historically drained for agricultural use, but we plugged that drainage ditch this winter to restore natural water levels and attract more wetland species. We hope to see improved wetlands and a diverse savanna full of native grasses and wildflowers in the next few years. Stay tuned... we will certainly share our findings.

West Prairie is a unique preserve in Wayne County hosting a globally rare plant community known as Lakeplain Wet Prairie. We have been working to restore this habitat in recent years by clearing a substantial amount of invasive shrubs and have been pleased to see a diversity of native plants spring up from the seedbank once properly exposed to sunlight. This year’s restoration is more of the same invasive work, but we’ll cap it off with a prescribed burn this fall, which will decrease the organic woody debris, suppress the invasives, and give fire-loving native plants an even stronger chance at survival.

Keep an eye on our facebook page and monthly emails to stay up to date on these projects, and plan to join our guided hikes this year at these preserves (see our website for details). We always need help with our habitat work, so contact us to learn more about how you can volunteer.

Private Land Protection through Conservation Easements
By Taylor Myatt, Stewardship and Outreach Specialist

SMLC shares a lot of news and information about our 17 nature preserves in the hopes that you feel inspired to connect with nature on a personal level and learn from its wonders. However, SMLC also protects over 745 acres of land through conservation easements.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and the easement holder (SMLC) that aims to protect the conservation values of a property in perpetuity. While easement-protected lands are usually privately-owned and, therefore not open to the public, they play a critical role in our land conservation efforts. SMLC easements help “buffer” (add a protected lands boundary around) existing nature preserves, save active farmland, and conserve locally important natural areas such as woods, wetlands, and meadows that otherwise wouldn’t have been protected.

As the easement holder, SMLC is responsible for monitoring these lands annually to make sure the terms of the Easement are still being upheld. We also work with our easement landowners who want to improve their property’s natural areas through habitat management planning and other stewardship practices.

Aldo Leopold, one of the great conservationists of the 20th century, said of this country’s degraded land ethic, “An ethical obligation on the part of the private owner is the only visible remedy.” We applaud the original donors and current landowners of SMLC’s 15 conservation easements who have done their part to protect land for generations to come.
American Mink

By Jack R. Smiley, SMLC Founder and Board Director

The American mink, Neovison vison (recently changed from Mustela vison), is a semiaquatic member of the weasel family and is an inhabitant of swamps, marshes, lake and river shorelines. If, like Thoreau, you enjoy tromping through these wetter environs, you may be able to see a mink as it scurries about on its daily routine.

Mink inhabit the entire United States and Canada with the exception of the arid southwest. They can be found throughout southeast Michigan, although their numbers are few in the more urbanized areas. Nonetheless, mink have been observed along the Rouge River with recent reports of mink in Detroit, Dearborn and Farmington Hills. This past year, mink were observed at both SMLC’s Sibley Prairie Nature Preserve – West Prairie and LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve.

Mink are long, slender animals with adult males having a body length of 13 - 18 inches, while females measure 12 - 15 inches. Their tails are 6 - 10 inches long. Mink have chocolate brown fur, similar in color to muskrats, and are sometimes mistaken for them, especially while swimming. A muskrat, however, would never mistake a mink for one of its own since mink are notorious for dining on muskrats. The mink’s sleek body enables it to enter burrows in search of its prey. Being carnivorous, mink also feed on other rodents, fish, frogs, crayfish, insects and birds.

One of my most memorable encounters with a mink was while canoeing on the Thunder Bay River near Alpena. Matching my speed as I paddled along, a solitary mink ran along the shoreline peeking into every nook and cranny along the way, presumably looking for its next meal, seemingly oblivious to my presence. Enjoy some quiet time next to a marsh or river. With luck, perhaps you’ll be able to see an elusive mink, too.

Continued from page 1

Intrinsic Value of Land

only look through the eyes of the tree sparrow and the Cooper’s Hawk.

Not only is the tree sparrow valuable as an individual life that procreates to carry on its species, but it is also a necessary component of the larger ecosystem. The hawk, for example, needs the tree sparrow and it’s other prey in order to survive. All ethics rest upon the premise that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. Could the ecosystem function without the individual? Yes, of course. But could the ecosystem function without every individual? No, it would cease to exist. This is the ethical argument for the intrinsic value of the individual in any context, in this case ecological.

In creation’s constant motion – uncontrollable, wild, chaotic, balanced, and free – dwells the assurance of goodness and, in turn, peace. Even though nature can be unpredictable, the peace of wild places is unchanging. This is innately good and worth protection. I know it’s a simple argument, but it’s also hugely critical and severely underrated.

While seeing nature as inherently valuable is the first step, we don’t get to sit back and admire it as spectators. Rather, we are a part of it and therefore obligated to participate in it in wise and helpful ways. Man has the capacity – which he often abuses – to cooperate with nature, to see himself as part of the whole and to act accordingly in a supportive manner. However, our history has demonstrated our excessive abuse of the land. In such a relationship, nature loses and, eventually, so does man. Therefore, I charge us all to maintain a community ethic toward nature, not only for the betterment of nature, which has value in itself, but also for that of your friend and neighbor – so that the peace of wild things may remain available to all for generations.

Far greater men than I have summed this up quite simply, so I’ll leave you to ponder this final thought from Thoreau … “in wildness is the preservation of the world”.

LANDMARKS  Spring 2018
I want to help preserve critical natural habitat in southeast Michigan by supporting Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy.

We Wish List
SMLC could use the following items:

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<thead>
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<th>Item Needed</th>
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<td>Mapping grade GPS unit</td>
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<td>Office Printer</td>
<td>$250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circular saw</td>
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<td>Hand towels and household linens</td>
<td>$50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hand winch</td>
<td>$30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bird food for our feathered friends</td>
<td>$20-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather work gloves</td>
<td>$5/pair</td>
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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

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.