Hello, my name is Rick Simek, and I am the new President of Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy. I have had the pleasure of serving on the SMLC Board of Directors for 11 years. It is an honor for me to be involved in an organization that so strongly reflects my own values relating to wildlife and farmland conservation.

I have been interested in the natural world since my childhood days growing up in Detroit. I have many wonderful memories of experiences in natural areas much like the ones that SMLC strives to protect. I have also watched as natural habitats and farmland have so rapidly disappeared from our local region.

I feel that in addition to protecting habitat, SMLC lands preserve experiences that people like you and I value and cherish. I look forward to working with all of you to ensure that our present generation, and those that follow us, will always have local natural lands to explore, and close-to-home farms that grow wonderful produce and connect us to the soil. These things are irreplaceable.

My background as a professional naturalist in southeast Michigan for the past 16 years has shown me that there is a great need to educate ourselves and our children about the precious living systems of Earth. What better nearby places than SMLC lands to do just that.

I often visit SMLC properties with my wife, Pam, and my daughters Jessica and Samantha. What a joy it is to have so many quality natural lands to explore within a short drive of where we live in Dearborn.

I look forward to meeting those of you with whom I have not yet had the pleasure to take a walk with at a SMLC preserve, or chat with over a campfire. To those of you whom I have known for so many years; let’s keep it going, and have fun doing it.

I hope to see you on the SMLC trail sometime soon as spring brings so many wonderful and exciting changes to the places that SMLC protects.

Changes at the Conservancy

It has been said that the only constant is change—and change has certainly been happening at the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy! The Board of Directors elected a whole new slate of officers at their January Board meeting, and the Board has decided to make a major push to increase staffing in 2006.

Jack Smiley, who has volunteered for 18 years as President since founding the Conservancy in 1988, passed the torch on to Rick Simek. A noted naturalist, Rick has been active on the Board for the past eleven years and is Supervisor for the Environmental Study Area at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. “For several years I had been hoping that Rick would agree to step up to become President of the organization,” said Jack. “He brings the passion and commitment that is needed to sustain the Conservancy into the years ahead.”

“It was Jack Smiley’s vision for local land conservation that originally drew me to become involved in SMLC,” said Rick. “In the years since, I have met many wonderful SMLC members who share my commitment to protecting local natural habitats and farmland. I continue to be inspired by...
Changes  continued from 1

everyone involved in SMLC, and look forward to doing my part to advance the conservation efforts we all value so very much.”

The other new Board officers include Bill Secrest, Vice President; Jim Weiner, Secretary; and Peter Scott, Treasurer. Bill has been active on the Board since 1991 and served for many years as Chair of SMLC’s Superior Land Conservancy committee. Bill teaches history and religion at Henry Ford Community College and is known for his philosophical approach to land protection. Jim Weiner is an environmental attorney and has been a great asset to the Board since he joined last year. Peter Scott also joined the Board last year, and works as a business consultant in Ann Arbor.

As a step in moving the Conservancy into a fully staffed organization, the Board appointed Jack Smiley to serve as the Conservancy’s first Executive Director. “With Jack’s experience, it seemed only natural for the Board to select him to help us transition the organization,” said Rick. “Jack has agreed to work on a part time basis with an eye towards implementing a full staff plan within two years. There is simply too much natural land being lost for us not to try to protect as much as we can in very short order.” The Conservancy also hopes to hire a fund raising person in the near future.

The Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy relies on the efforts of a great many people to be successful. If you would be willing to become more active by serving on a committee or on the Board, please let your interest be known by contacting Rick, Jack, or the staff at our farm office.

SMLC Receives Major Bequest

By Jack Smiley

We were humbled and deeply honored to recently receive a bequest of $205,000 from the estate of Mrs. Julia Morris. We are extremely pleased that she thought so highly of our organization to leave such a generous donation.

Mrs. Morris was a long-time member of the Conservancy and was one of our most generous supporters. She, along with her husband, Dr. Joe Morris, and Dr. and Mrs. Rudolph Reichert, had donated 242-acres to the Conservancy in 1998, near Gregory in Livingston County. We were so enamored with their generosity and their passion for the land that we insisted on naming the property the Morris-Reichert Nature Preserve in their honor.

Julia Morris was especially generous to a number of environmental and educational organizations as she cared deeply about leaving a better world for future generations. It was truly my pleasure to have known Julia Morris for a number of years and I always felt inspired by our conversations. She embodied a sense of hope and goodness that is not often found in today’s world. Julia Morris was simply one of the most kind, thoughtful persons that I have ever had the pleasure of knowing.

The Board has established a separate account for the Morris bequest, and will take due care to assure that it will be used to further our efforts to protect land and to provide a lasting and fitting tribute to Mrs. Morris.

We are deeply saddened by her passing, but take joy in knowing that she has enriched our lives, and the lives of many who were never even fortunate enough to meet her acquaintance.

What can you do to Leave a Legacy?

1. Prepare a will. Only 50% of those who pass away have one. Without a will, you may lose control over your belongings.

2. Leave a gift in your will for the nonprofit and charitable organizations that you support. Imagine the positive impact on our community if everyone made a donation to a favorite nonprofit.

3. Leave a specific dollar amount or a percentage of the assets in your will to the nonprofit of your choice.

4. Consider using assets for your charitable gift. These include but aren’t limited to: stocks, bonds, CDs, real estate, vehicles, and insurance policies. Such gifts may even provide tax savings.

www.landconservancy.com/legacy
SMLC Bluebird Trails - you can help!

If you would like to get out more often to an SMLC nature preserve while doing something helpful for wildlife, here is a relatively simple thing you can do to improve habitat quality on SMLC preserves: adopt some bluebird nestboxes along a bluebird trail.

Through the efforts of various volunteers over the years, the Conservancy has built up a collection of around 60 bluebird nestboxes now posted at various points around the LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve in Superior Township. And if the interest is there, we can set up bluebird trails on other SMLC preserves, too.

Eastern Bluebirds were once abundant in southeast Michigan but now struggle to maintain breeding populations. SMLC preserves are protecting the old-growth trees with nearby grassland landscapes that bluebirds need, but it is a slow process. In addition, competition from House Wrens and non-native House Sparrows can be fierce. Bluebird trails, properly maintained, have been found to be quite an effective way of sustaining bluebirds in an environment that no longer suits them well.

Monitoring involves opening the box (at least once a week during nesting season), repairing boxes as needed, and documenting what you see and do. Once a bluebird has chosen a nestbox, opening it for brief inspections does not disturb them.

Bluebird monitoring is a great project for beginning or advanced birders and a nice way to enjoy the natural areas that, with your help, SMLC is working to protect. And someone from SMLC can guide you in how to do it, too. Please consider taking some time this spring and summer to help these fascinating and beneficial birds, then contact Scott Tyrrell, SMLC volunteer coordinator if you are interested.

How you can be a Bluebird Trail Monitor

Contact: Scott Tyrrell, SMLC Stewardship & Volunteer Coordinator: (734) 484-6565 smlcstewardship@animail.net

Bluebirds build nests mid March – July.

You may start any time. Figure about a 2-3 hour commitment per week during nesting season.

Monitoring involves visiting your boxes (at least once a week during nesting season), cleaning, repairing boxes as needed, and documenting what you see and do.

We will have bluebird monitor training Friday March 31, 6:00pm and Tuesday April 4, 6:00pm or by appointment at the Conservancy farm (8383 Vreeland Rd., Superior Twp., MI 48198).

We need to install predator guards on some posts. This is a good project even if you don’t want to do regular nestbox monitoring.

Adopt as few or as many boxes as you are comfortable taking care of.

There are about 60 nest boxes already installed around LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve near Ypsilanti. Contact Scott Tyrrell if you’d like to start a trail on another preserve.

Thank You!

The following people have donated valuable items or services to help SMLC

- Karl Zinn (lawn tractor)
- Donna Chrzanowski (farmhouse furnishings)
- Ken McQuade (rain barrels)
- Helen Jeter (office equipment & supplies)
- Wendy Pellerito (custom framing)
Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas Effort Shows Promising Results at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve

by Dea Armstrong

The first Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas, undertaken and published in the 1980’s, was a massive effort to map out the breeding ranges and presence of all birds that breed in Michigan. Since then, the information in the Atlas has proved invaluable to scientists and natural resource managers, as well as to conservation organizations such as SMLC in their bird protection planning.

Fast forward to the present. It will be a surprise to no one connected with SMLC that the Michigan DNR believes that bird distribution and abundance has changed since then. Data for the second Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA-II), currently underway, will likely be compiled and published by 2010.

Preliminary Atlas results (at least for Washtenaw County) show that SMLC properties have some interesting breeding birds to be proud of, especially at the LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve, where diverse, contiguous habitats support a host of species. Most exciting at the Preserve is the presence of at least two to three nesting pair of Marsh Wrens, currently listed by the state of Michigan as a "species of special concern." This secretive marsh dweller is more often heard than seen, but its call is a distinctive one and easily recognized with a little experience. The mitigated wetland area at LeFurge has also been shown by Atlas surveyors to harbor many other breeding birds such as Sora Rail, Willow Flycatcher, Pied-billed Grebe, Song Sparrow, and Tree Swallow, to name a few.

Also of note are the grassland nesting species at the preserve, which include Sedge Wren, Vesper Sparrow, Field Sparrow, and Eastern Bluebird. The woods and woodland edges provided nesting habitat in 2005 to uncommon species like Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoos as well as the more common species like White-breasted Nuthatch or Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers.

In conserving local habitat for birds and other wildlife, SMLC has an important role to play in assisting with the continued survival of numerous bird species. SMLC preserves also provide wonderful local opportunities for birders and others to enjoy the wonderful and diverse bird life of our region.

Atlas work will continue this year and depends on volunteers. Confirming nesting birds can be as easy as seeing a bird with nesting material in its mouth or one carrying food (as long as you can identify the species of bird!).

If you’d like to become a surveyor for the Atlas or would just like to report an observation of a nesting or potentially nesting bird on the SMLC properties, please contact Dea Armstrong, the Washtenaw County Coordinator for the current Breeding Bird Atlas, at ddarm@umich.edu or 734-996-3266.
Pileated Woodpecker at LeFurge Woods

by Ed Cable

I photographed this Pileated Woodpecker (Dryocopus pileatus) at the north end of the LeFurge Woods Preserve on January 22. A week later, long feeding holes that only a Pileated could have made were found in a dead maple at the center of the forest.

At first glance, the Pileated Woodpecker is more easily mistaken for a crow than any of its woodpecker kin. Except for the nearly-extinct Ivory-billed Woodpecker, it is by far the largest woodpecker in North America. As you may imagine, this big woodpecker needs big trees (and lots of them).

Mature trees provide generous cavities for the Pileated to nest in, as well as a source of their favorite food: Carpenter ants. Large areas of old forest are in short supply in southeastern Michigan, making the Pileated an unusual bird to see in the area.

Perhaps this bird was only visiting for a while, but maybe it will stay to nest and raise young at LeFurge. Either way, finding one at LeFurge Woods means that the forest is supplying this bird with the habitat it requires to live. This represents the first sighting for the species at LeFurge.

Crunching for Conservation

By Rick Simek

Around the time that the above-mentioned woodpecker demonstrated its fondness for grubs at LeFurge Woods, a group of high school students were demonstrating their fondness for conservation by eating grubs.

Inspired by their teacher, Shawn Grose, a group of students from Berkely High School were challenged by other students to eat mealworms, maggots, crickets, even Madagascar hissing cockroaches, by putting dollars in a jar to raise funds for conservation.

Grose teaches a class called the Art and Science of Wilderness Survival and the students are members of Berkely High’s Wilderness Survival Club. The event raised $100 for the Conservancy, as well as boosting awareness about land conservation when the students were highlighted in the Detroit Free Press and Channel 4 News.

We greatly appreciate students’ highly imaginative and courageous efforts to preserve and protect habitats for local wildlife!
SMLC Summer Program Adventure for High School Students

Explorations in Field Natural History and Wildlife Conservation

Are you a high school student who enjoys observing and studying wildlife and being outdoors? Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy (SMLC) is offering an exciting summer program that will include in-depth studies of local plants and animals in their natural habitats. In the program, you will…

• Accompany a professional naturalist each day to explore marsh, forest, meadow, and farmfield habitats at the beautiful, 424-acre LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve near Ypsilanti.
• Observe and identify a variety of living things including birds, mammals, trees and shrubs, wildflowers, amphibians, reptiles and amphibians, and more.
• Develop your nature observation skills.
• Use field equipment such as binoculars and field guides to become more familiar with field natural history techniques.
• Keep a nature journal of your field observations.
• Develop and do an on-site wildlife conservation project that involves using GPS (Global Positioning System) and GIS (Global Information System).
• Meet people who are actively involved in local wildlife conservation.
• Make a difference in protecting local wildlife.

Daily, 2½ hour sessions will be at different times each week to take in the different wildlife activity at the preserve. Early morning sessions during the first week will enable you to see and hear a wonderful variety of local birds that nest at the preserve. Evening sessions the second week will find you searching for twilight-active and nocturnal animals such as bats and owls. In the last week, you will put your field observation skills into practice as you join your peers in doing the wildlife conservation project.

If you happen to be interested in a career relating to wildlife, this experience will also provide you with a wonderful service learning opportunity!

The primary instructor for the class will be Rick Simek, President of Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy. As a naturalist in the local region for the past 18 years, Rick has spent a great deal of his time sharing his knowledge of nature and passion for conservation with many groups. Rick is currently the program supervisor at the University of Michigan-Dearborn Environmental Interpretive Center, where he has been developing and leading environmental programs for the past 12 years.

The program is free of charge, but you will need to provide your own field equipment from a specified equipment list put together by the instructor.

Due to the intensive nature of this experience, participants must be between 14-18 years of age. No exceptions will be made for younger children.

We will be trying to arrange for car-pooling to get to LeFurge Woods for each program session.

To find out more about the program, contact Rick Simek at (313) 583-6371, or go to the SMLC website. Once registered, you will receive a program syllabus that also describes the field equipment that will be necessary for you to have each day of the program.

The registration deadline for the program is May 31. We will be having a pre-program meeting sometime in June to get acquainted and to go over some basic field observation techniques that we will be using.

Space is limited, so please contact Rick as soon as possible if you are interested in taking part.
Community Organic Garden Plots Available

By Jay Schlegel
Community Organic Garden Coordinator

To build a community, they say you have to start with the basics and build it from the ground up. And what is more basic than a community garden? What could be more rewarding than knowing exactly where some of your food comes from, what went into growing it, and that it was grown in an environmentally friendly manner?

If this reflects how you like to approach gardening, consider joining us this summer at the SMLC Community Organic Garden at the Conservancy farm on Vreeland Road in Superior Township. This will be the second year for the Garden, so we now have a better idea of what will be involved. There are 20' x 20' full plots or 10' x 20' half-plots available. The plots were laid out and plowed before last season.

Although the site is still not certified organic due to the three-year period that we need to grow things organically there, we are very committed to gardening in a manner that is healthy for the land and ourselves. We’ve got compost already cooking in the compost bins (from a local horse stable), and it is almost ready for use in the gardens. All we need now is: You!

If you are interested in finding out more, you can download a copy of the Garden Plot Registration Form and the Gardening Rules and Guidelines sheet, which outlines the basics of organic gardening, from the SMLC website. Or, better yet, stop by the farm, take a look around, and pick out your own garden plot. For more info, check out:

www.landconservancy.com/gardens

SMLC Summer Program Adventure for High School Students
Explorations in Field Natural History and Wildlife Conservation

Registration deadline is May 31

A three-week program:
• Monday-Friday, June 26-30: 6:00AM to 8:30AM
• Wednesday-Saturday, July 5 - 8: 7:30PM to 10:00PM
• Monday-Thursday, July 10-13: 6:00PM to 8:30PM

The program is free of charge, but you will need to provide your own field equipment from a specified equipment list put together by the instructor.

Participants must be between 14-18 years of age. No exceptions will be made for younger children.

We will be trying to arrange for car-pooling to get to LeFurge Woods for each program session.

To find out more about the program, contact Rick Simek (313) 583-6371, or go to the SMLC website:

www.landconservancy.com/summer2006

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www.landconservancy.com
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We do strive to be as accurate as possible. Please let us know if you find an error.
Volunteers Needed for Invasive Species Removal at SMLC Preserves  by Scott Tyrrell

This year there will be more opportunities than ever for you to come out and help with stewardship projects on the beautiful nature preserves that SMLC protects. While there are literally hundreds of invasive plants in our region that cause varying degrees of problems for native ecosystems, we’ve identified five that are particularly damaging to the habitat quality on SMLC preserves: Glossy buckthorn, Autumn olive, Purple loosestrife, Garlic mustard, and Phragmites.

Why remove invasive species? Approximately 30% of Michigan’s 2,600 plant species are alien plants that have become naturalized (capable of establishing and sustaining themselves in the environment) largely in the last hundred years. While most naturalized aliens blend into the ecosystem, some can grow to the exclusion of native species – crowding out habitat critical to the survival of the complex web of plants and animals long adapted to this region. And while invasive plant species won’t be eliminated, their spread can at least be managed. Doing so is a great way to learn about what makes Southeast Michigan’s landscape special and why it’s worth protecting.

And nearly anyone can help. By working in groups, we’ve found ways for people within a wide range of abilities to participate. The three main tasks on an invasive removal project are: cutting plants, hauling the brush to piles, and applying herbicide. SMLC uses a glyphosate-based herbicide that, while quite effective on plants, has been found to be non-toxic to animals – including people. In addition, once glyphosate kills the roots of plants that take it in, it breaks down relatively quickly into inert compounds that become harmless. Nevertheless, we apply herbicide carefully and directly to each stump we cut to minimize spread beyond the troublesome plant. If we don’t use herbicide to kill the roots, invasives just sprout back with even more vigor.

Stewardship work days are a great way to get out into the natural world, learn what SMLC nature preserves have to offer, and spend time with good company. You’ll feel a sense of accomplishment and you’ll see the results of your work for many years to come.

If you’d like to get notification of stewardship opportunities that will be coming up in 2006, please contact SMLC Stewardship & Volunteer Coordinator Scott Tyrrell: (734) 484-6565 smlcstewardship@animail.net

Michigan Loses Legendary Conservationist

by Jack Smiley

Michigan lost a true champion of land conservation with the passing of Bertha Daubendiek, 89, on November 16, 2005.

Bertha Daubendiek was the heart and soul of the Michigan Nature Association, leading it since its formation in 1951, as the St. Clair Metropolitan Beach Sanctuary Association, until she retired as MNA’s Executive Secretary in 2001.

Bertha’s selfless dedication led to the establishment of over 150 nature preserves throughout Michigan. Perhaps her most well-known effort was the acquisition of the Estivant Pines in the Keewenaw Peninsula in the early 1970s.

Threatened with logging, Bertha Daubendiek led the charge for the Michigan Nature Association to raise the funds to purchase this spectacular example of Michigan’s once-grand pine forests.

Across the state, Michigan residents can enjoy the results of Bertha’s lifelong pursuit of protecting our natural heritage. She served as an inspiration to many, although few will ever be able to follow in her footsteps.

Bertha Daubendiek was truly a rare individual, constantly working to preserve Michigan’s unique natural wonders for future generations. All of Michigan owes her a huge debt of gratitude. She will be missed.
Introducing Board Member Peter Scott

Peter Scott, who began serving on the SMLC Board in spring 2005, has just been elected SMLC Treasurer. Peter’s most distinguishing feature is new fatherhood; son Tucker was born in November. Another characteristic that really makes heads turn is the ownership of 6 dogs; 2 Weimaramers, 2 Australian Sheep Dogs, a German Short Hair and, to top it all off, a 150 lb English Mastiff.

On a professional note, Peter works with start up companies in Ann Arbor helping them find funding to create high tech and high growth companies. He graduated with Engineering degrees from the University of Michigan and the University of Cincinnati, as well as a Business degree from U of M.

Peter lives on the north side of Ann Arbor and is a big fan of going for bike rides through all of the farm land and open space that is still available north of M-14.

SMLC Committees

Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy depends on the efforts of volunteers serving on committees. Members like you are encouraged to participate by helping explore ideas and carry out the mission of the Conservancy. The committees are:

- **Farmhouse** (1st Wed 7:00pm)
- **Community Organic Garden** (2nd Saturday 2:00pm)
- **Membership & Development** (2nd Tuesday 6:30pm)
- **Superior Land Conservancy** (3rd Wednesday 7:30pm)
- **Monroe County Land Conservancy** (2nd Thursday 7:00 PM. at Monroe County Community College rm A-173D)
- Two committees, **Stewardship** as well as **Property Acquisition** do not currently have specified meeting times.

Each committee meets once per month at:
the Conservancy Farm, 8383 Vreeland Rd., Superior Twp. 48198

Check our website for more details. For more information contact Scott Tyrrell, Stewardship and Volunteer Coordinator at (734)484-6565 or smlcstewardship@animail.net
YES! I want to help preserve critical natural habitat in southeast Michigan by supporting Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy.

Name ____________________________
Address ____________________________
City___________ State_____ Zip________
Phone (____)________________________
Email ________________________________

Direct my donation:

General Fund $_______
Land Acquisition Fund $_______ (to be used only for purchase of land)
Endowment Fund $_______

Total enclosed $_______

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

Direct my donation:

General Fund $_______
Land Acquisition Fund $_______ (to be used only for purchase of land)
Endowment Fund $_______

Total enclosed $_______

Make your check payable to Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy and mail to:

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

All donations are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. We will never give or sell your personal information to any other group.

Wish List

The Conservancy can put the following items to good use at the farm:

- GPS unit
- Tractor (or tractor services)
- Small Water tower materials, design, or construction.
- Gravel for small parking lot

Please contact Wendy at the office if you would like to donate any items:

(734) 484 - 6565
smlcaa@ameritech.net