

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.

SMLC Local Chapters

Monroe County Chapter
Superior Township Chapter

Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy

8383 Vreeland Road Superior Twp., MI 48198 734.484.6565 734.484.0617 (fax) www.smlcland.org November 2015

Dear Friend:

Madeleine had never seen a bald eagle in the wild before. This was her lucky day. You can play a part in making more lucky days for kids of all ages.

Thank you for your past interest in **Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy**. You are receiving this letter because at some point our paths crossed and we connected over our appreciation of nature. So I am reaching out to you and asking that you <u>renew your love of the great outdoors</u> and local land conservation by joining Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy (SMLC) today.

Your membership gift will help support saving local lands. Your support means that you can continue to take your family and friends to visit a local preserve. Once there you might experience your own lucky day.

This past October, SMLC formally dedicated the Lost Lake Nature Preserve. Attendees enjoyed the program and activities including a hike along the new 2.1 mile trail. I was in the last hiking group, and I was ready for a nice walk to conclude the successful event. I had finished speaking to the large crowd about the importance of the preserve to the region, and what a beautiful place it was. I shared news about SMLC's two other new public preserves and I talked about the Sibley Prairie (Wayne County) and the Superior Greenway (Washtenaw County): conservation areas where saving local lands and creating public nature trails are beneficial for the local communities and visitors. I relayed that that was our vision for the Lost Lake Nature Preserve.

So I was ready after all the pomp and circumstance for that nice walk with my hiking group. Along with young Madeleine I was ready for the beautiful fall colors and group fellowship.

(OVER)

What I was not expecting was the large BALD EAGLE that flew over to join our group!

A couple of people had seen it earlier, circling high above riding the air currents on that windy day. We were all intrigued and secretly wished we had seen it. Wish granted! Within a minute, the majestic bird was back, flying over the prairie opening from the woods nearby. It soared and spiraled high above while we strained our necks to get better glimpses of its aerial feats.

Madeleine was mesmerized. We all were. How could we not be? The eagle's white head was clearly visible and its enormous wingspan was awesome in flight. The eagle stayed with us until we reached the center of the prairie opening and turned towards the next set of woods.

This is the kind of experience that lives on in our memory – a connection to nature that some consider sacred. This is what can happen when large tracts of land, in this case 538 acres!, are conserved in urban areas. This is a large enough area for the eagle to visit, and even to live permanently. Providing places for animals to live, roam, and find food and mates, is a signature conservation goal of SMLC's.

Your membership gift will help SMLC continue to provide homes for local and visiting wildlife such as the Bald Eagle.

The following Sunday morning I checked my email, and it was good that I did. "Judy" asked how to access the hiking trail at Lost Lake Nature Preserve – the very one we just opened to the public. I emailed her back the directions and wished her well. That evening Judy wrote again. This is what she said,

"So glad I emailed you and you responded back. We spent 3 hours on our walk with family and even had a picnic lunch at [the] lake. Beautiful day, beautiful preserve, beautiful future vision of what it will become! Thanks to nature for creating the family memories we experienced today! :)"

I immediately emailed her a reply to let her know I was happy that they'd had this wonderful experience at a local nature preserve. Then I shared her message with the SMLC staff, because we had put so much hard work into getting the preserve ready for the public opening including planning and creating the nature trail. Here's what they would have seen:

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From the public trail entrance on Evans Road, Judy and her family would have followed the Lost Lake Nature Preserve trail as it wound through dense woods before opening up onto one end of a historic "prairie" airplane runway that is in the shape of a cross. While in the woods, they may have seen deer, red-tailed hawks, and many other animals. From the prairie opening, Judy's family would have continued down the trail towards the lake surrounded on both sides by tall, graceful big bluestem and the shorter little bluestem prairie grasses. They would have been amazed at the site of a prairie so close to I-75! Once they arrived at the scenic lake overlook they stopped to enjoy the tranquil scene as she notes above.

Slack Lake is a peaceful home to blue herons, sandhill cranes, and ring-necked ducks. The scenic overlook is a great spot to take photographs and a break. From there, Judy and her family would have left the prairie and continued following the trail through a beautiful forest. Towering oak and maple trees dominate a large hilly area left behind by retreating glaciers more than 10,000 years ago. On the other side of the trail, the family would have continued to see Slack Lake through the trees and began to glimpse the wetlands it is connected to.

This complex of woods, wetlands, and lakes is part of why protecting Lost Lake Nature Preserve is so important ecologically.

Before reaching the point where the trail turned uphill and opened back again onto the prairie, the family might even have seen Madeleine's bald eagle. From there it is a short hike back to the center of the prairie runway cross where they would have retraced their steps to the trail entrance.

Creating a way for people to experience nature in such a profound way is why it was so important to get the public nature trail in at Lost Lake Nature Preserve this year.

Your membership gift will help continue the work of making local natural areas places where people like you, and Madeleine, and Judy's family can create long-lasting memories.

You are an important piece in saving the southeast Michigan places that speak to our hearts and that provide places to hike, to see animals, and to enjoy the beauty of nature. As an SMLC member you will receive the newsletter twice a year and invitations to our guided nature hikes and fun events including our annual Bat Count and Picnic at the Farm. We even host full moon campfires at our LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve where you can sit by the fire and relax!

More importantly, <u>you will be part of a larger conservation vision</u>, one where you are an integral part in making a difference by helping make the world a better place for all.

So please join SMLC and be part of the solution. SMLC saves land. SMLC has been doing it for 27 years and in three places in our region we're starting to see a difference because of the support of people like you: Lost Lake, Sibley Prairie, and the Superior Greenway.

If you like the idea of being able to easily get to a beautiful local nature preserve in less than 30-45 minutes from almost anywhere in southeast Michigan, then <u>your support of SMLC will help</u> keep that going.

Your membership gift of any amount is both highly appreciated and highly leveraged through foundation grants and other annual income. However, today I am asking that you consider a gift of \$50 or more to help SMLC continue providing public access to beautiful and important local natural areas for you and future generations like you to enjoy.

Don't delay. Your membership gift needs to be received by December 31st for it to count this year. Complete the enclosed membership form and mail it back with your check in the enclosed return envelope or visit www.smlcland.org and make a safe and secure online donation. You can begin making a real difference in saving land, providing a home for animals, and creating more public nature trails in southeast Michigan with your gift of support to SMLC.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy

Jill A. Lewis

Executive Director

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Enclosures

P.S. Your \$50 or larger membership gift will do a lot of good for the environment, for animals, and for all of us too. Send in your gift today.