



LANDMARKS

Newsletter of the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy

Spring 2021



Rainbow at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve

Photo by Charles Scott

The Restorative Power of Nature

By Jill A. Lewis, Executive Director

I am welcoming spring more purposefully this year. It follows a long time of being at home or socially distanced for many of us and being able to get outside in warmer weather has been like a balm. It's been gratifying to see the recent seasonal changes and feel the warmth of the sun on my face as I take my daily walks. This is not just a physical experience but also a mental stress releasor and emotional soother even though we are experiencing another tough COVID surge.

It's fascinating that Helen Keller, a beloved American author and disability rights activist, wrote about the power of physical exercise in natural surroundings using some of the same rationale that is used today. You may be surprised to learn that Ms. Keller was an active outdoor enthusiast who loved horseback riding, rowing, and morning walks with her dogs even though she was both blind and deaf. Her 1933 article in Good Housekeeping, "Storehouse of Health Pays a Yearly Bonus of Happiness", was written from the perspective of someone who had spent a good portion of her life outdoors.

Continued on page 11

"I am partial to those forms of physical exercise and recreation which bring me into direct contact with nature. I have always [had] the feeling that nature has the power to renew and refresh our minds, our bodies, and our spirits. One of the few quarrels I have with modern life is that it has removed us too far from a direct contact with nature."

Helen Keller

A Look Inside

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LANDMARKS

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Conservation is in our Nature.

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Message from the Executive Director, Jill A. Lewis



It has felt good this year to be able to do a few more normal SMLC spring activities such as producing this newsletter, even though it is against the backdrop of the ongoing pandemic. 2021 operational planning, for example, has been challenging given the recent Michigan COVID surge. For now, the office continues to be closed to the public and Julie and I continue our outdoor and remote working situation. In addition, SMLC is not looking to conduct any public outreach events or large stewardship workdays for the foreseeable future.

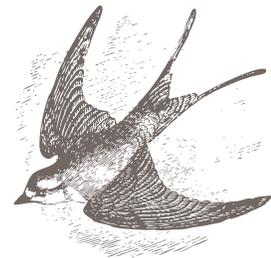
However, SMLC's mindset as we look forward is more hopeful. We've begun discussing our re-opening (most likely in phases) which is a different approach than the unexpected shutdown and keep it safe mentality we needed last year. As part of that, we are cognizant of all federal, state, and county orders and guidance and are making any changes mindfully and in compliance with those.

In 2021 SMLC was granted forgiveness for our first Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan and applied for and received our second PPP loan. These funds have proven very helpful for SMLC as we navigate the continuing economic uncertainties carrying over into 2021. In addition, SMLC may now be eligible for other federal relief and we are looking into that.

Additional good news is that SMLC is planning to hold our rescheduled Red Barn Bash in October and we were recently awarded a \$75,000 Challenge Grant from The Carls Foundation to help fund our new public Stewardship Fund. We will need your support to make both activities successful (see **page 3** for more on both).

Finally, we are looking to complete a new public trail and begin construction on a new public parking area at our Secrest Nature Preserve later this year. If things work out, we would like to host a public Dedication event in September. Stay tuned for more.

SMLC is deeply appreciative of all of our 2020 donors, funders, SNAP the Season sponsors, and Lost Lake and West Prairie nature preserve project partners. We could not have come out of last year in a good financial position without you – thank you!



New Faces: In 2020, SMLC welcomed Kathy Hammond, Office Specialist, and Evert Van Raden, contract Bookkeeper, to the team. When the office is back open, stop in and say hi :)



Stewardship Fund Campaign

By Jill A. Lewis, Executive Director

During the past 32 years, SMLC acquired 18 nature preserves and 15 conservation easements. As our acquisitions have grown, the needs of our Stewardship Program have dramatically risen. Unfortunately, our annual operational funding has not been able to absorb this increase. In 2020, the SMLC Board of Directors approved the creation of a new public Stewardship Fund. This past February, The Carls Foundation awarded SMLC a \$75,000 challenge grant to help seed this new fund. SMLC is very grateful to the Foundation for their ongoing support of our mission and conservation work.

The new permanent Stewardship Fund will support pre-determined nature preserve and conservation easement expenses with the seed funding expected to help for at least 5 years (this includes a backlog of waiting items). Examples include: annual nature preserve monitoring; installing preserve signage; invasive species removal and building maintenance and repair.

The \$75,000 challenge grant will match the initial \$75,000 that SMLC needs to raise first. This brings the total seed funding to \$150,000 minimum. Thus, the Foundation is contributing a generous 1:1 match to donor dollars.



Building Boardwalks

Photo by Scott Tyrrell

You can help SMLC reach our goal of raising the initial \$75,000 before 12-31-21, the grant deadline, and your gift will be doubled!

To make a gift to the *SMLC Stewardship Fund Campaign*, please see the coupon on the back of this newsletter or make an online donation at www.smlcland.org and note Stewardship Fund Campaign.

SMLC's Red Barn Bash is Back!

SAVE THE DATES

Virtual Kickoff: Saturday, October 2, 2021
 At-Home Experience: October 2nd – October 29th
 Ticket Price: \$50

In-Person Event*: Saturday, October 23, 2021
 Time: TBD, likely evening
 Place: Ypsilanti Freighthouse, Ypsilanti (in historic Depot Town)
 Ticket Price: \$75 combined At-Home Experience / In-person Event



This year's Red Barn Bash is all about the Naturehood – a place where we experience the beauty and wonder of local woods, wetlands and prairies and unite for conservation.

The new At-Home Experience will feature exclusive conservation videos, a fun SMLC Trivia Night; and other TBD activities that you can enjoy safely from home.

The In-Person Event will follow all required COVID-related protocols*. Attendees will gather to learn about SMLC's recent conservation successes while enjoying local food and drinks. Event planning is in the works.

2021 RBB Corporate sponsorships are available and appreciated. Please contact Jill Lewis at jlewis@smlcland.org for more information.

President's Report

By Mary Ericson, SMLC Board President

I am writing to you for the last time, now from my new position as former President (and current Vice President) as I look back on a year we won't easily forget. No one could disagree that 2020 was an interesting and challenging year! It was also my fourth and final year as SMLC President. When I took office in 2017, SMLC began a significant project of upgrading our governance policies and practices. The Board instituted an annual workplan, formalized our organizational review process, and – with the critical assistance of Jill Lewis – improved many of our policies and made clearer “who does what” within SMLC. There is more to do, and I am confident in the Board's commitment to continue this work, even though it was challenging at times in 2020 to make progress on our normal, planned work.

Over this past year, the pandemic scuttled much of our agenda. COVID-19 presented an unprecedented challenge that our Executive Director, Staff, Board and Committees had to quickly learn and navigate. SMLC had to pivot our operations to comply with numerous and changing governmental orders. New rules to follow and the need for quick decisions resulted in closing the Farmhouse, canceling outreach events, and learning Zoom and other virtual tools, for example. Hopefully, these changes helped keep the entire SMLC family safe.

On the bright side, we continued progress on Land Trust Alliance Accreditation; the Board formed a team to address SMLC's support of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and the Staff worked toward property-readiness at our new Secrest Nature Preserve.

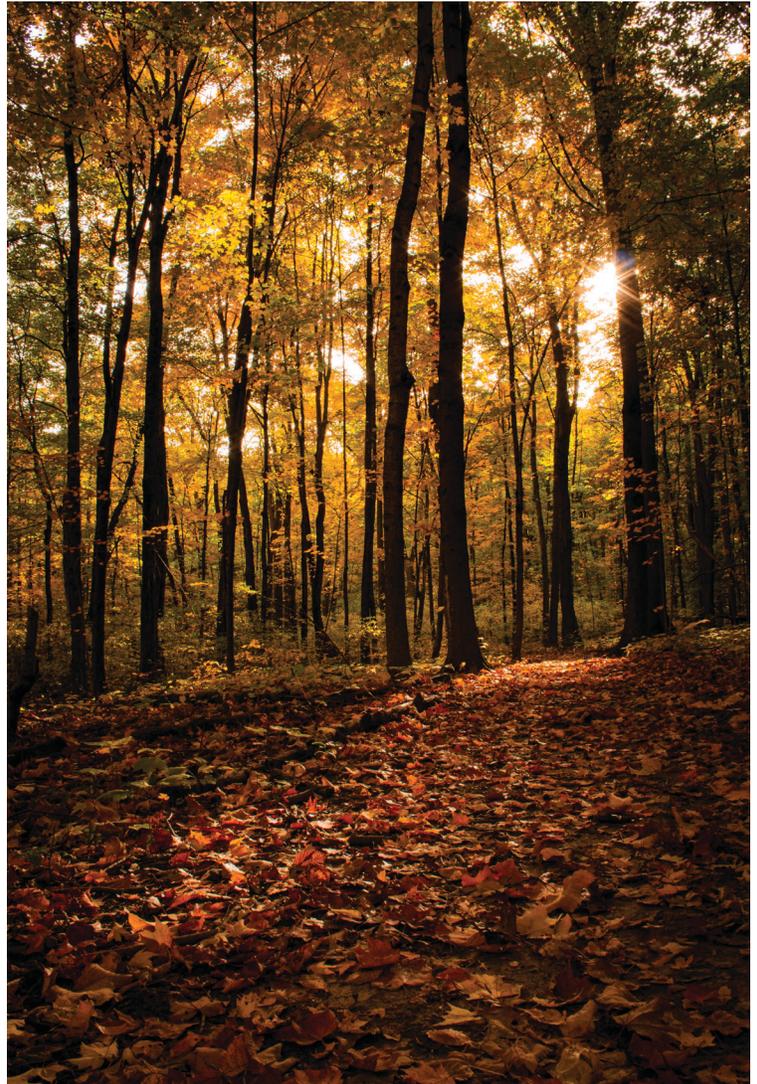
Fundraising was creatively altered by Jill and the Event Planning Committee, enabling SMLC to reach donors virtually. These innovations, along with new federal funding programs and, *most importantly, your continued financial support*, enabled SMLC to finish 2020 better than anticipated. **Thank you, donors!**

SMLC also explored some new land protection possibilities, although not all were achieved in 2020. We look forward to sharing more with you in the coming years regarding land acquisitions and nature

preserve restorations that proceed to successful completion.

All in all, SMLC is weathering the COVID 19 storm exceedingly well. With calmer waters in sight, our next President, Jim McIntyre, will guide us to our original heading, continuing to grow and improve this organization as we achieve our mission of land conservation.

On a personal note, I want to thank everyone I worked with during my tenure as President. It takes a village as they say, and SMLC is no exception. I appreciate the Board, the Staff and all of you for supporting our work during the past 4 years, and assisting me with helping SMLC become more sustainable. Thank you!



Forest at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve

Photo by Snap the Season winner Alexis Dahl



Trees, proud standing people
 stretching fingertips to the
 sky, reaching, praying
 glorious attention, breathing
 light.
 strength
 shelter
 timeless confidence
 bending and firm
 comforting
 rooted chorus line
 dancing with the moon, the
 wind, the clouds
 framing bursts of stars
 tender rugged celebration
 absorbing and releasing life
 each holy branch holding
 the power of the Universe.
 There.

-Wallace Stevens



Trout Lily

Photo by Mark Even

Get Email Updates from SMLC

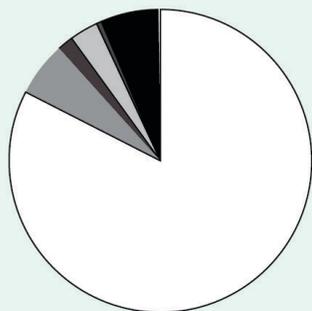


Don't miss out on the latest Conservancy news, events, and announcements. If your address has changed, be sure to let us know that too.

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

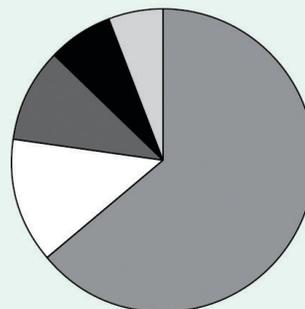
2020 Financial Report

Revenue
 \$232,391*



- Funds Transfers 6%
- Program Income 1%
- Event Revenue 1%
- Investment Income 2%
- In-Kind Donations 6%
- Contributions 89%

Expenses
 \$240,769*



- Depreciation 6%
- Fundraising 7%
- Mktg/Outreach 10%
- Mgmt. & General 14%
- Land Protection 64%

* unaudited



Thank You

for supporting our Mission in 2020!

The Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy extends appreciation to all of our generous donors. Your 2020 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 - \$49,999

Anonymous

\$10,000 - \$24,999

James A. & Faith Knight Foundation

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Speckhard-Knight Charitable Foundation

The Nature Conservancy – Lakeplain Prairie Office

\$1,000 - \$4,999

Busch's Fresh Food Market
Domino's Pizza, LLC

Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio
Plymouth Orchards & Cider Mill
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

\$500 - \$999

Capstone Tax & Financial
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EarthShare of Michigan
Michigan Wildflower Farm
Red Ventures

Reynolds Water Conditioning Co.

\$250 - \$499

Boisvenu & Company P.C.
Kroger Community Rewards

\$1 - \$249

AmazonSmile Foundation
Country Garden Club of Northville
Couzens Lansky, P.C.

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Firespring Foundation
Microsoft Matching Gift Program
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Pfizer Foundations Matching Gifts Program

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Toyota Motor Engineering Matching Gift Program

Gifts from Individuals

\$10,000 and up

William Secrest & Misty Callies ^{ELLC}

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Morgan Stanley GIFT – Kurt Jung Family, Kurt & Maura Jung ^{ELLC}
Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan – Fred G. & Stephanie Secrest Fund

\$1,000 - \$4,999

Chris & Michelle Andrzejak ^{ELLC}
Sean Cronin ^{ELLC}

Michelle Deatrick ^{ELLC}

Mary Emmett ^{ELLC}

Mary Ericson ^{ELLC}

Fidelity Investments Charitable Fund - Art & Marion Gold ^{ELLC}
(includes Fred G. & Stephanie Secrest Fund Matching Gift)

Craig Fields ^{ELLC} (includes Kresge Foundation Matching Gift Program)

Jeffrey & Marilyn Gilbert ^{ELLC}

Mitch & Lori Hall ^{ELLC}

Jeffery Hannah & Nur Akcasu

Lee Jasinski

George & Nancy Kasdorf

Richard Kent ^{ELLC}

Diane Krause

Evan & Laurie Lyall ^{ELLC}

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Bill Phillips & Marianne Udow-Phillips ^{ELLC}

James Reynolds ^{ELLC}

Ann Robbins ^{ELLC}

John Schlansker ^{ELLC}

Dan & Lily Secrest ^{ELLC}

(includes Fred G. & Stephanie Secrest Fund Matching Gift)

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Jonathan & Katie Trevathan ^{ELLC}

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 Anonymous

ELLC Eco-Logical Leadership Club



If you are interested
 in joining the
 Eco-Logical Leadership
 Giving Club (ELLC),
 please contact Jill Lewis,
 Executive Director
 at jlewis@smlcland.org

Memorial Donations



In Memory of our grandmothers, Glenda & Eledia
 By Glenesha Berryman

In Memory of Herbert & John Conant
 By Jim Conant

In Memory of Gavril Pop
 By Stephen Modell

In Memory of Barbara Meyer
 By Page O'Donnell

Great Birds in the Greenway

By Juliet Berger, President, Washtenaw Audubon Society and Ornithologist for the City of Ann Arbor Natural Area Preservation Department

When I was asked to write about interesting birds migrating through the Superior Greenway in the month of May, I wondered whether I was up to the task. Uncommon raptors migrate through the Greenway in March and April, including tundra breeding Rough-legged Hawks, and majestic Golden Eagles, but by May in Southeast Michigan, it's full blown songbird migration season.

There are several notable areas for migrating songbirds at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve. This largely forested preserve has scrubby habitat with shorter, younger trees and shrubs which warblers favor, as well as mature oaks in which they also find their most favored delicacies. Our native oak trees support many species of caterpillars, which are favorites of migrating birds. The caterpillars help birds fatten up quickly to arrive on their breeding grounds in good shape for courtship, nest building, and egg laying.

In addition, LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve has some active vernal pools in the wooded area, where frogs, toads and salamanders breed, and Waterthrush of both busy species, Northern and Louisiana can be found near these pools in migration.



Marsh Wren in Cattails Photo by Wendy Pellerito

Other interesting bird species found during their nesting time include rare Marsh Wrens and Least Bitterns in the swampy cattail marsh, and a rare Clay-colored Sparrow which has nested at LeFurge Woods for the last few years, one of very few breeding Clay-colored Sparrows in the southern part of Michigan.

Orchard Orioles, never common in our state, usually nest at LeFurge Woods, and sing their varied flutelike song along with their more abundant cousin, the Baltimore Oriole. We can be proud of how many threatened Michigan bird species find a safe home to raise their young in these protected lands.

As for other unusual birds across the Greenway, we see Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoos at Washtenaw County's Kosch Headwaters Preserve, and less common warblers like Connecticut, Mourning, and Canada Warbler have been found in good migration years at Superior Township's Cherry Hill Nature Preserve.

For more information about the birds mentioned in this article, please visit www.allaboutbirds.org or use the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Merlin App to identify the birds around you and record them in eBird, www.ebird.org

For more information about Washtenaw Audubon's community of birders, see www.washtenawaudubon.org for virtual programs, during COVID times, and many more events in the after COVID times. To participate in Ann Arbor's Breeding Bird Survey, contact Juliet at NAPBirds@a2gov.org



Native Plants and Insects Win Big!

*By Michelle McIntyre, Superior Township Chapter
Steering Committee*

In 2018 the Superior Township Chapter of SMLC began work on the first phase of a project to support native plants and beneficial insects and educate the public about their importance. A beautiful Native Plant and Insect Garden was installed at the entrance of the Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve to showcase native forbs and grasses that host a variety of pollinators. Educational information was provided on nearby kiosks so visitors can learn more about the relationships between the plants and the insects they support. This showcase garden is thriving and attracting much interest from both insects and preserve goers alike.

Last fall, the Chapter began planning for phase two of this exciting project. Through a generous grant from Ann Arbor Farm and Garden, an area of 13,000 square feet, about 1/3 acre, at the preserve entrance will be transformed into a native prairie. This second phase of the project will allow the public to observe the plants and insects in a more naturalized setting.

Currently, the phase two project area is a field of mowed grass containing mostly non-native and invasive species. Transforming the area into a restored prairie will require lots of expertise and volunteers. Site preparations will begin this summer with plantings and seeding to happen in the fall. Stay tuned to SMLC communications to find out how you can support this amazing project that adds beauty and biodiversity to our township!

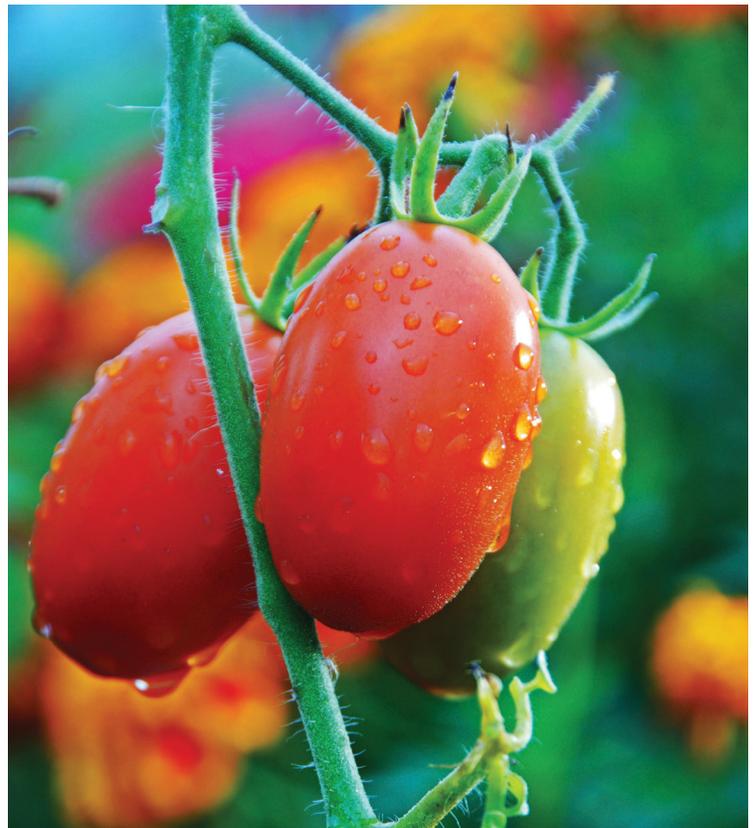


Collecting Native Plant Seeds *by Julie McLaughlin*

Garden Plots Available for 2021

Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy runs a Community Organic Garden at the Conservancy Farm nature preserve in Superior Township, Washtenaw County. The garden promotes SMLC's mission by bringing awareness to the need for local food and farmland protection, and it helps to demonstrate that crops can be grown without the use of pesticides.

The Community Organic Garden is set amidst over 1,000 acres of protected nature preserves and farmland, so viewing songbirds and other wildlife is a favorite activity of gardeners. It is a great place to be outside growing your own veggies.



Tomatoes in the Community Garden *by Charles Scott*

If you would like to share in this experience we would welcome your participation. Plots are available on a first-come, first-served basis. A full plot is 20'x20', and half-plots are also available. Contact volunteer Garden Coordinator Jack Smiley by email at jackrsmiley@gmail.com if you are interested in gardening. Additional information is available on SMLC's website at www.smlcland.org.

Restoration and Renewal

By Julie McLaughlin, Stewardship and Outreach Manager

Every spring feels like a new opportunity, but none has felt quite so revitalizing in light of the past year of hardships and triumphs.

While 2020 was certainly not business-as-usual, the stewardship of our nature preserves was more important than ever as we saw record visitors turn to the outdoors for a change of scenery, regardless of winter temperatures. In late 2020 and early 2021 SMLC successfully applied for funding to improve visitor experience at our most frequented preserves, including building additional boardwalks through wetlands, mulching muddy trails, and responding to increased parking lot use. Part of SMLC's mission is to provide habitat for wildlife and to enrich the lives of people, and we are humbled by the opportunity to continue to enrich the lives of our community residents and visitors in southeast Michigan, through small but meaningful infrastructure and habitat improvements.

Our multi-year prairie restoration at Lost Lake finished with the seeding and germination of native grasses and wildflowers. This project will be entering the less intense maintenance phase, as we continue

to control invasive species and encourage prairie establishment. To see a timeline of the project from start to finish, check out the Lost Lake Virtual Hike recording available at <https://youtu.be/PiWAvE67Nds?t=687>.

The lakeplain prairie restoration at our Sibley Prairie - West Prairie site also reached a new high point – for the first time since SMLC acquired it in 2014, this preserve was able to undergo a thorough and safe prescribed burn. The burn was conducted last month as a result of the unusually dry winter weather. During the summer of 2020, our restoration partner, The Nature Conservancy, not only planted hundreds of native blazingstar plants in restored areas, but were also able to document the use of this habitat by the state-threatened blazingstar borer moth. This moth is one of the target species at this site to benefit from the prairie restoration, funded by the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act (GLFWRA), (see Fall 2020 *Landmarks* Wildlife Sightings).

These restoration projects require consistent and committed effort including from SMLC volunteers, and offer great rewards to both wildlife and human visitors once completed. Check out **page 9** for an opportunity to volunteer for a prairie restoration project at the Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve.

Many thanks to our volunteers...

To the **Landmarks** newsletter guest writers: Juliet Berger, Mary Ericson, Michelle McIntyre, and Jack Smiley.

To our **photographers**: Alexis Dahl, Mark Even, Wendy Pellerito, Charles Scott, and Scott Tyrrell.

To the **stewardship** volunteers: Carla Bisaro, Kevin Bohannon, Sean Callahan, Sarah Ferrero, Colby Gura, Haley Gmutza, Jordan Hammerberg, Linda Irvin, George Kasdorf, Amanda Klain, Russell Love, Michelle McIntyre, Ryan Muncy, Bill Secrest, Kerry Truxell, Allison Vega, and Ann Sung and the scouts of Troop 903.

To our **preserve watchers and monitors**: Joyce Arakelian, Eva Deck, Alex Goren, Colby Gura, William Hickey, Robert Moll, David Olson, and Ali Vogt.

And especially to our dedicated **Committee Members**: Michelle Andrzejak,

Cathy Bach, Brenda Baker, Carla Bisaro, Misty Callies, Bryan Collett, Ani Cooper, Michelle Deatrick, Donald DeMallie, Mary Ericson, Craig Fields, Heidi Guenther, Michael Hahn, Mitch Hall, Ruth Hart, Richard Kent, Kathi Kucharski, David Ladomer, Sally Lunn, Jim McIntyre, Michelle McIntyre, Tony Pitts, Jim Robertson, William Secrest, Shawn Severance, Jack Smiley, Jonathan Trevathan, Maria Vicini, Rebecca Wauldron, James Weiner, and Jacob Yesh-Brochstein.

Thanks to everyone who volunteered with SMLC this year!

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





Grassland Songbirds

By Juliet Berger, President, Washtenaw Audubon Society and Ornithologist for the City of Ann Arbor Natural Area Preservation Department

The Superior Greenway really shines in providing habitat for some of our rarest songbirds, the grassland birds! Henslow's Sparrow, which is endangered in the state of Michigan, breeds year after year at the Conservancy Farm on Vreeland Road. This lovely sparrow with an unassuming song, which is no more than a couple of slippery clicks, nests in old hayfields such as those found at the Conservancy Farm nature preserve. The male often can be heard singing his tiny little song through the night in the fields.

Sedge Wrens, with their mechanical sounding songs, can often be heard singing by day in the same fields, along with the bubbly songs of

Continued from page 1

The Restorative Power of Nature

Today we know that nature has restorative benefits for physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. For example, a 2010 study from the Netherlands attempted to measure whether the presence of green space can lessen negative health impacts of stressful life events. The results showed that "the relationships of stressful life events with the number of health complaints and perceived general health were significantly moderated by the amount of green space in a 3-km radius. The same pattern was observed for perceived mental health, although it was marginally significant."

But it goes further than an individual standpoint. How does nature impact surrounding communities and other social systems? One newer study area is Eco-healing. As defined by the University of Minnesota's Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing, "Eco-healing focuses on the important role nature plays in the promotion and maintenance of people's health and the health of the social systems in which they live."

Bobolinks and haunting Eastern Meadowlarks. With the Greenway composed of acres and acres of agricultural fields, grasslands, meadows and old hayfields it is a perfect spot for nesting grassland birds, many of which are imperiled in our state. Last year, a flight of a Western grassland bird, the Dickcissel, landed on Gotfredson Road near Vreeland Road, and spent the summer singing the song that gave them their name, searching for mates in the tall grass.



Eastern Meadowlark Photo by Cornell University

SMLC's mission is to conserve natural lands in urban and rural settings, to provide those places where people can access beautiful restorative settings and feel the warm sun on their faces as they commune with trees, birds and each other. As Helen Keller said, "I am convinced that it is my abiding friendship with nature which has kept me unusually healthy throughout my life, for this fellow feeling with nature enters into most of my physical activities...[and] I am imbued with a sense of physical and mental wellbeing."



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 Campaign (give by 12-31-21)**

\$ _____ 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.*

Wish List

SMLC could use the following items:

Item Needed	Retail Cost
6' x 18' utility trailer	\$3,500
3 point hitch tractor wood chipper attachment	\$2,500
New or gently used laptop (prefer Dell XPS no older than 2019) with Windows 10, 16 GB RAM and 500 GB storage	\$1,500
Fire Safety Equipment	\$1,100
Good working order black and white Business Printer	\$250
New or gently used linens for our Farmhouse kitchen and bathroom	\$150
Wildlife camera	\$100
Vernal pool monitoring kits	\$75 each

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

(734) 484-6565 | info@smlcland.org

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