

Protecting the Paw Paw River Watershed: Farris Conservation Easement

Howard Farris learned very early in his life that people cannot be separated from the land. And when he speaks, his love of the land is evident.

Growing up on a farm in Berrien County, Farris developed a close relationship to the land. He learned that land and people are interdependent. When he bought his own farm in Van Buren County in 1969, he put what he had learned as a youth into practice.

Farris immediately called on the Michigan State University Agriculture Extension associates to help him develop a conservation plan for his 75-acre tract. He also asked the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to walk through his farm and advise him; there was lots of open land, and he wanted to reestablish the woods. Farris planted 20,000 trees of five different species in 1971 and 1972, as recommended in the conservation plan. These trees were not to be used for timbering but for creating a natural area. Dr. Farris developed hiking and walking trails through the woods and along the creek. Family and friends enjoyed these trails over the years, and Farris taught his son and daughter to cross-country ski there.

SWMLC was indeed fortunate that Dr. Farris was willing to work with us to protect this unique property. The property is a significant natural resource in the Paw Paw River Watershed and comprises a prairie fen with springs that create a small stream that flows into the



This tributary to the east branch of the Paw Paw River weaves lazily through the Farris property. Photo by Peter Ter Louw.

east branch of the Paw Paw River.

Conserving land to protect the Paw Paw River is a high priority for SWMLC. Working with numerous partners, SWMLC has initiated a two-year project to identify critical water resource areas and develop land protection strategies to conserve these important areas. The project is funded by an EPA/MDEQ 319(h) watershed management project grant to preserve

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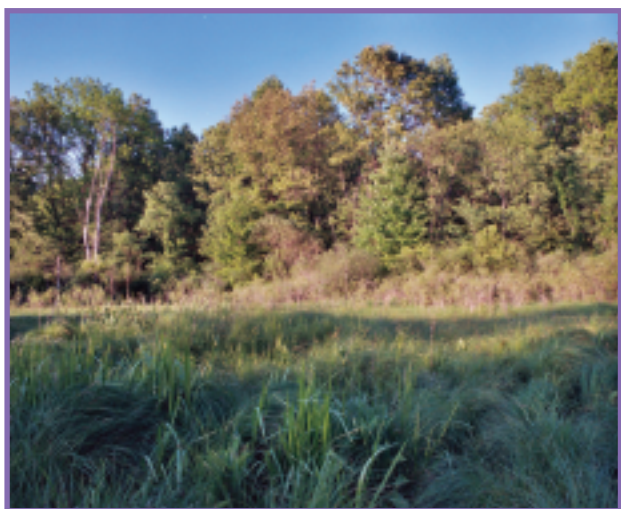
Paw Paw River Watershed Project: An Overview

The Paw Paw River Watershed is one of the most ecologically significant and pristine watersheds in southwest Michigan, covering 400 square miles and encompassing the villages of Mattawan, Lawton, Paw Paw, Hartford, Lawrence, Watervliet, Coloma, and Benton Harbor. The river begins as a series of small coldwater streams in western Kalamazoo County flowing through the heart of Van Buren County and into northern Berrien County. It empties into the St. Joseph River shortly before the mouth at Lake Michigan.

(continued on page 3)

water quality and quantity in the watershed. Working with landowners in Alma and Antwerp Townships, SWMLC is taking a leadership role in protecting conservation areas that contain headwaters of streams within the Paw Paw River Watershed, thereby protecting the viability of this river system.

The Farris Conservation Easement property features a prairie fen wetland with more than a dozen springs, supporting the State-Listed Eastern box turtle. Along with neighboring properties, the population of this turtle is known to be one of the largest in



This spring-fed fen supports a diversity of wildlife, such as box turtles, all year long on the Farris Conservation Easement property. Photo by Peter Ter Louw.

Michigan. Oak woodland and pine plantation make up the rest of the property. "It's a lovely place," Farris said, "a respite from the world."

Farris had been a member of

SWMLC for several years, reading our newsletters and learning about land protection options. He had spoken with co-founder and former president, Richard Brewer, and educated himself about available options. He became serious about protecting the land as he saw more and more rural land being developed. "It became clear to me that if we wanted the land to stay the same, we

had to do something," he remembers. "If the land is somehow not preserved in a way that's fairly bullet-proof from development pressures, it's going to change."

So Farris called a family meeting. The family was in consensus about protecting the land. Looking at the many land protection options available, Farris determined that none seemed quite right. He turned to SWMLC and began discussions with staff.

"We had a pair of red-tail hawks come every year to the south woods," Farris remembers. The pair completed several successful nesting cycles, and their offspring returned to the same area after that. "One year we

had a pair of immature eagles in one of the trees near the vineyard," he said.

SWMLC board member Alfred

Gemrich loves the fact that Barred Owls are found on the property. One of his great joys is to walk SWMLC properties with conservation and stewardship direc-

tor Nate Fuller and listen to Nate call in Barred Owls. When they respond, Al is delighted.

In addition to his enjoyment of the birds found there, Farris also speaks appreciatively about the topography and development within Antwerp Township, noting its uniqueness in that the buildings exist on the periphery of the section he lives in. The interior of the township is mostly wooded.

The Farris family enjoyed living on the property and caring for it. The fen, the many springs, and the wildlife were woven into the quality of life valued by the entire family. The ten acres of vineyards produced grapes that became wine and Welch's Grape Juice. The family grew and sold flowers and herbs. "It was a really good hobby," Farris remembers. "And it helped us financially. My son grew melons and vegetables, too."

The land and everything it supported was important enough for Howard Farris to protect. Forever.

— Pamela W. Larson

"It's a lovely place, a respite from the world. It became clear to me that if we wanted the land to stay the same, we had to do something."

— Howard Farris

Meet the Eastern Box Turtle . . .

Our Eastern box turtles are protected by law in Michigan as a Species of Special Concern. They are easily identified by the distinctive markings on their "box," or carapace. Most box turtles remain within a very small range during their lives, usually under five acres. They can live for several decades — some may live for over a century — and spend their winters resting underground or buried in leaf litter. The Farris property and neighboring Stock property support these special creatures. Said Gary Stock, former SWMLC president, "Howard has shown his concern for the future of the community in many ways. He understands the value of the land, and that preservation is its highest and best use. The best hope for Eastern box turtles in Michigan will be here in the southwest."



Eastern box turtles thrive on the Farris farm and adjoining Stock property. Photo by Gary Stock.

Paw Paw River Watershed Project: An Overview

(continued from front page)

In January of this year, the Southwestern Michigan Commission, a metropolitan planning organization, received funding from a U. S. Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act Section 319 Watershed Management Grant to conduct a two-year planning project on the Paw Paw River Watershed to protect water quality and habitat.

SWMLC has been asked to participate in this important watershed plan. We have received funding to serve as a facilitator, provide leadership in creating a land protection committee of local officials and landowners, identify and map critical resource areas, and work with committee members to engage landowners in protecting their land. Additional partners in this project include The Nature Conservancy, Sarett Nature Center, Berrien County Parks Board, and the Van Buren County Planning Board.

Historically, the western half of the Paw Paw River Watershed was predominantly forested with an upland forest canopy of maple, beech, oak, and other trees. The wetlands were dominated by

swamp forests that supported the most diverse group of trees in the state with a variety of elm, maple, ash, basswood, sycamore, cottonwood, and many others.

In the eastern half of the watershed, oak was the most common tree. This was a landscape made up of oak-hickory forests that opened up into savannas and prairies that graded down to open wetlands of marshes and fens.

Great expanses of open wetlands could be found throughout the watershed, most notably near the start and finish of the river. The springs that form the headwaters of the Paw Paw River came from open prairie fens and flowed for miles before entering large marshes near the mouth of the river where it joins the St. Joseph River.

Today, almost two-thirds of the watershed area is agriculture, with a good portion of ecologically significant riparian corridors. Along these corridors surrounding the river and streams are prairie fens and forested wetlands that filter surface water and provide critical habitat for a diversity of species.

A number of plants and animals

rare to the rest of Michigan, to the entire Midwest in fact, can be found in the Paw Paw River Watershed. Many watershed residents still consider the Eastern box turtle a common sight, while most people outside of this

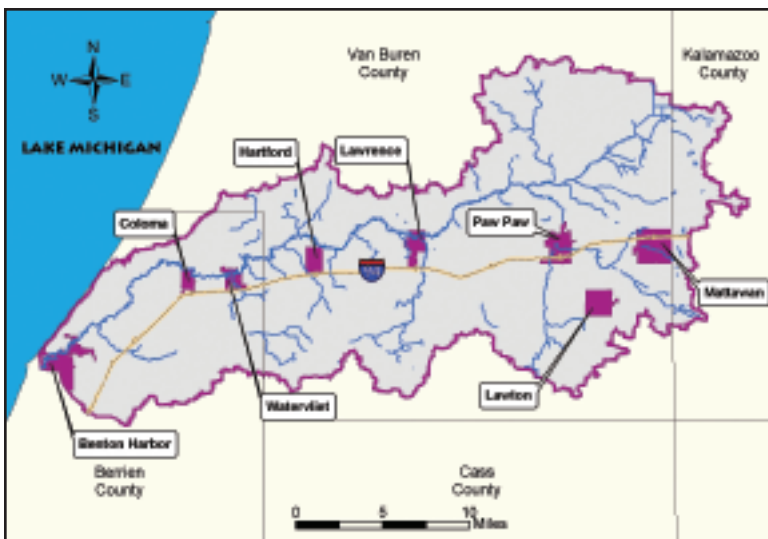


*The Paw Paw River glistens in the woods at SWMLC's Paw Paw River Preserve.
Photo by Nate Fuller.*

region know them only through photographs. The Prothonotary Warbler, also known as the "golden swamp warbler," regularly nests in the holes of snags that line the Paw Paw River, and is found along only a handful of other rivers in Michigan. Fewer than 20 populations of the Federally Endangered Mitchell's Satyr butterfly are still in existence in the world, and three of the largest populations can be found within the Paw Paw wetlands. The Paw Paw River Watershed holds a treasure trove of wildlife that still survives because of the watershed's extensive natural areas.

These bountiful habitats and high-quality waters, as well as locally important agriculture, are continually threatened by incompatible development. Through the two-year planning process, SWMLC hopes to create a unified vision of land conservation for this region and to educate landowners on how they might protect their land. We will build on this opportunity to fulfill our mission of permanently protecting the natural, historic, and scenic landscapes to ensure the health and quality of life for the people of southwest Michigan.

— Pete DeBoer



*This map of the Paw Paw River Watershed shows the large geographic area encompassed by this valuable resource.
Map created by Pete DeBoer.*

Conservation Planning to Protect Gull Lake

A surprisingly small creek and its surrounding watershed hold the key to the long-term future of water quality for Gull Lake. Containing numerous springs and seeps, underlain with sands and gravels, Prairieville Creek is supplied with an unusual amount of groundwater flow. Recognizing that any increase in development within this watershed is a substantial threat to the entire system, SWMLC is developing a collaborative conservation plan to protect this creek.

Initiated several years ago as a Four Townships Water Resources Council (FTWRC) project, SWMLC is partnering with FTWRC, Kellogg Biological Station, Gull Lake Quality

Organization, Prairieville Township Park Board, and landowners to learn more about this invaluable stream system and identify strategies for land protection and stewardship.

Prairieville Creek is the primary tributary and significant contributor of water into Gull Lake.

Prairieville Creek is a small, first-order trout stream that is classified as a first-quality cold-water stream. Located at the southern end of Barry County, the creek originates through a series of large springs. Flowing south

through a small natural impoundment (Mud Lake), Prairieville Creek empties into the north end of Gull Lake and is the major source of tributary inflow to Gull Lake.

The creek is approximately two miles in length with an average width of 15 feet and a depth of four inches. The land along the creek is characterized by fen, marsh, and wooded

wetland with gently rolling hills. The watershed has two different sections: an upper creek segment above Mud Lake containing the springs with numerous small inflows, ecologically notable prairie fen, and marsh; and the lower section containing a more defined stream course, with a largely wooded riparian zone.

The annual volume of water that Prairieville Creek supplies to Gull Lake represents 60% of the total tributary inflow into Gull Lake and supplies about 21% of the lake's annual water budget. Prairieville Creek and adjacent drainage areas at the north end of Gull Lake contribute a disproportionately high amount (35%) of the total groundwater inflow.

Prairieville Creek is the only cold-water fish-spawning area for Gull Lake and potentially supports spawning by Atlantic salmon, rainbow trout, northern pike, and several species of suckers. Smelt, first introduced into Gull Lake in 1950, have been reintroduced in recent years and use this creek for spawning purposes.

This area, with its high rate of groundwater discharge, virtually never freezes for more than a few days. As a result, it feeds and shelters large numbers of game and non-game animals. Each winter thousands of waterfowl and shore birds, as well as hundreds of deer and upland species, winter and reproduce in the valley. Many of these species could not survive without this protection, at least not at their current population levels.

A conservation plan put into use by all partners will be critical to maintaining the health and quality of life for the people who live in the Gull Lake watershed, as well as the wildlife that depend upon it for their survival.

— Peter Ter Louw



This aerial shows the Prairieville Creek Watershed, a significant contributor to Gull Lake. Map created by Pete DeBoer.

New Preserve Brings Birds and People Together

The rainy weather did nothing to dampen the spirits of the 45 enthusiastic people who turned out to see Kesling Nature Preserve dedicated at the end of April. The event was held to recognize and thank Dr. Peter and Mrs. Charlene Kesling for their generous gift of this 52-acre birder's paradise in Three Oaks Township. The event also recognized SWMLC's Galien River conservation partners: Berrien Birding Club, Chikaming Open Lands, St. Joseph River Valley Fly Fishers, and Three Oaks Township.

After a welcome and introduction by SWMLC board president Betty Lee Ongley, conservation partners spoke regarding their efforts to preserve the integrity of the Galien River Watershed. Jonathan Wuepper, representing the Berrien Birding Club, noted, "The Kesling Preserve is a wonderful asset to the community, benefitting the plants and animals that thrive on that land, as well as the enjoyment of birders, hikers, and general nature lovers."

SWMLC executive director Peter Ter Louw recognized the Keslings for donating the preserve for all of the partners to

enjoy and stated that he expected this gift to create future conservation projects along the Galien River. Said Ter Louw, "Dr. and Mrs. Kesling's generosity extends beyond the gift of this preserve. Their donation will hopefully serve as a catalyst for the partners and landowners in this region to protect this beautiful and biodiverse river. We greatly appreciate their commitment to conservation and thank them for their philanthropy."



Jacob's ladder and prairie trillium are two of the special plants found on this preserve. Photo by Nate Fuller.



Adam Kesling, far left. Charlene, Emily, and Peter Kesling, far right. SWMLC board president Betty Lee Ongley and executive director Peter Ter Louw stand next to Adam. Photo by Erin Fuller.

Dr. Kesling stated that he and Charlene were convinced that the future of the property was in competent hands. "We have many great memories of our family picnicking and enjoying this property, and we wanted to share our good times with all of you," said Dr. Kesling. "It was our pleasure to make this gift to SWMLC."

Following the sign unveiling and photo ops, field trips were offered. Nate Fuller, Peg Kohring, Lynn Steil, and Jonathan Wuepper served as knowledgeable guides. Wildflowers in bloom along the ravine included prairie and white trillium, Jacob's ladder, and lots of anemones.

SWMLC thanks Dr. Peter and Mrs. Charlene Kesling for their generous and far-sighted donation of this beautiful property. Kesling Nature Preserve is open to the public from dawn until dusk. Bring your binoculars. Take only memories, and leave only footprints.

— Pamela W. Larson

Birdathon Team Wings Its Way to Record-Setting Donations

SWMLC's Berrien Birdathon Team, "Hairy, Two Downies, and a Red-head," raised over \$3,500 this year, completing their most successful birdathon ever!

Jody Simoes, Katie Kahl, Erin Fuller, and Nate Fuller began their trek at mid-

night on May 20 and by 7 p.m. had listed a total of 123 species and logged many more miles. The rare Worm-eating Warbler made an appearance, as did Prairie Warblers and Vesper Sparrows.

The team worked hard to procure donations from supporters from Oregon

to Massachusetts and states in between.

SWMLC thanks everyone who donated and participated. The team hopes next year to awaken without ice on their tents. Birds aren't the only ones who prefer a warm spring migration!

The Birds of Wau-Ke-Na Demonstrate the Dynamics of Wildlife Management

Visitors to Wau-Ke-Na have noticed some changes to the property this spring, changes that they weren't expecting. Some found the changes challenging, particularly a group of those that had been away for quite awhile, spending the winter down south, enjoying the warmth and profusion of tasty bugs. At the end of their long flight back north, they found their regular summer homestead burned to the ground and the thick stand of grasses much diminished. Sedge Wrens are particular about where they spend their summers and most did not find this year's changes to their liking; on the other hand, the Bobolinks loved it.

As a group, grassland birds are the most rapidly declining group of birds in North America. This is due to lack of habitat, which is something Wau-Ke-Na offers to a variety of grassland-dependent species like Sedge Wrens, Bobolinks, and Meadowlarks. The tricky part is providing a variety of habitats for those species. Sedge Wrens prefer tall grasses and sedges with lots of standing vegetation left over from previous growing

seasons and open fields over 25 acres in size. Bobolinks and Meadowlarks prefer their habitat a little less thick and tall but equal in acreage. Last summer found numerous Sedge Wrens on territory throughout the grassland planting and a handful of Bobolinks and Meadowlarks.

This spring the Ganges Township Fire Department generously burned nearly 20 acres of grassland at Wau-Ke-Na. This was necessary to help suppress woody species like cottonwood and ash from invading the grassland. Unfortunately, this made the area undesirable for the Sedge Wrens. The adjacent fields were separated by tree lines and were either too small or lacked the necessary amount of grass.

The wrens would have to find another home for the summer, but luckily there was one close by. By not mowing several acres adjacent to the fields, Sedge Wrens moved into the areas that previously had been mowed short.

A diversity of birds seemed drawn to this new habitat of unmowed grass intermixed between the pines, ponds, brush, and buildings of the preserve. On one June morning, over 25 species were found within sight of the driveway



*This shy Barred Owl was seen at Wau-Ke-Na in June.
Photo by Tyler Bassett.*

into Wau-Ke-Na. Some of the highlights included a pair of Eastern Kingbirds in courtship near the pond, Brown Thrashers and Gray Catbirds trying to out-sing one another from nearby bushes, and a Sedge Wren declaring its territory next to a pine tree holding a House Wren doing the same.

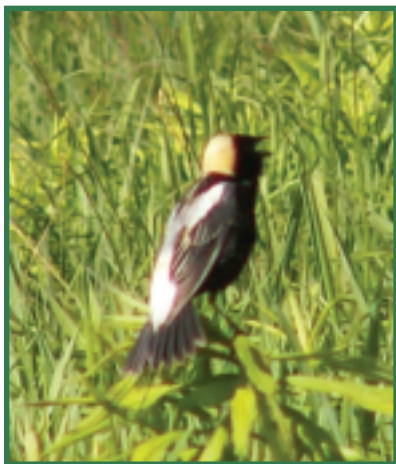
Meanwhile the Bobolinks have

moved into the grassland in full force! Later that afternoon, one could stand in the middle of the field and

The birds currently found on Wau-Ke-Na are indicators that good habitat exists. This gives SWMLC a sound starting point for future management.

count no less than ten male Bobolinks at a time vying for the attention of females — a very rare sight these days.

The interaction of birds and the habitat can offer many lessons on natural areas habitat, the greatest of which is that nature is dynamic, and that is a good thing. Managing for wildlife is never simple. Some decisions are made by people, such as whether or not to burn, mow, or leave fields fallow. Others are decided by powers beyond



*Numerous Bobolinks at Wau-Ke-Na indicate the grassland habitat is on the right track.
Photo by Nate Fuller.*

our control, such as seasons of unusually wet or dry weather, damaging winds, and outbreaks of disease or pests.

SWMLC does not plan to manage Wau-Ke-Na just for birds. By providing large blocks of a variety of habitats, we can provide homes to a great diversity of wildlife, some of which are in dire need of safe homes. The grassland birds of Wau-Ke-Na are only one example. One could study insects, plants, or other indicators to determine the habitat's quality. Birds are a simple indicator, easy to see and hear. The Holland Audubon group has been very helpful in identifying what types of birds are using which habitats.

One could look to the northern

portion of the preserve and see how the forest birds are responding to changes to the forest. The changes have been more subtle, but no less important. The block of forest is expanding and woodland birds that require large blocks of closed canopy forest are going to increase in number as the woods expand to the north to reclaim what was once cleared for an orchard and pine plantation. Many of the woodland birds depend on the insects that live on the leaves of hardwoods like beech, maple, oak, and hickory. Of course not all birds that live in the woods eat bugs. A recent visit to the preserve found a Barred Owl roosting in the forest. This is a bird that cannot survive in the matrix of tiny wood

lots that dot the countryside — that is the territory of Great Horned Owls, and they eat Barred Owls that stray from the deep forest.

While the details of the long-term management plan for Wau-Ke-Na are developed, we will follow a basic strategy: provide large blocks of habitats that include variety. This means expanding the area of the grasslands but providing a variety of height and thickness of cover. It means expanding the forests using a variety of trees to provide many different sources of food and shelter for wildlife. In the end, the old proverb is true: variety is the spice of life.

— Nate Fuller

Rest Stops: For the Birds

Why is the lakeshore so desirable to the birds? Many species avoid flying over the open water of Lake Michigan. When they encounter the lake, they follow the shoreline toward their destination. On their routes, they stop along the way to rest and refuel.

Migration is *hard*; it requires a massive amount of energy and is likely the most dangerous period of a bird's life. Birds encounter predators, unfamiliar environments, foul weather, and other trials as they travel thousands of miles. A suitable stopover site — such as Wau-Ke-Na or Kesling nature preserves — will offer essentials like food, water, and protection from predators to these tired migrants.

As our natural landscape has become fragmented, fewer suitable stopover sites exist. Consider a bird migrating along the lakeshore in the early 1800s: that bird had its pick of quality stopover sites. When it got tired, it stopped and rested. Today's migrants don't have the same opportunity. Roads, towns, and farm fields now occupy much of the landscape,

surrounding remnants of quality habitat. Habitat fragmentation is also a crucial factor affecting migratory species on their breeding and wintering grounds. However, we must not forget to protect the areas that sustain them during migration.

The intricacies of migration remain somewhat mysterious. Perhaps this mystery is why migration is so fascinating. Scott Weidensaul, in his book *Living on the Wind:*

Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds, writes: "We are such stodgy, rooted creatures. To think of crossing thousands of miles under our own power is as incomprehensible as jumping to the moon. Yet even the tiniest of birds performs such miracles."

This stodgy creature, for one, will continue to root for all efforts that sustain the miracle of migration. I have always appreciated Michigan's lakeshores for the sun and sand. Now, I



The Blackburnian Warbler, seen here at rest, uses our lakeshore during migration. Photo by Steve Dillinger. Provided courtesy of Audubon Society of Missouri.

also appreciate the opportunity to observe birds like American Redstarts or Blackburnian Warblers in migration along the avian highway of Michigan's west coast.

— Erin Fuller

Erin Fuller is the Black River Watershed Coordinator for the Van Buren Conservation District. She currently serves as president of the Audubon Society of Kalamazoo.

The Rich Resource That Is Dunes Parkway

During the past several years, SWMLC has been working to conserve forested and open dunes along the lakeshore in Van Buren County in a project area we refer to as Dunes Parkway. Working with eight landowners, SWMLC has protected almost 100 acres along Blue Star Memorial Highway. Dunes Parkway is a forested coastal dune located about a mile from Lake Michigan. It sits between Blue Star Hwy. and US-31.

This past year, SWMLC contracted ecologist William Martinus to study this region to create a natural features inventory so that we could better understand this area in order to more effectively conserve and manage this resource. The findings of his report reaffirm that Dunes Parkway is a critical piece to the success of migratory birds

because of the remaining significant blocks of forested habitat. Even more surprising is that the area is botanically richer than we first thought. What SWMLC learned from Bill's report will help us make sound management decisions for the preserve. The excerpts that follow are from *Dunes Parkway Natural Features Inventory*, by William Martinus, 2005:

- All of the parcels that make up the Dunes Parkway belong in a single hardwood forested dune plant community. A general Mesic Southern Forest heading seems most appropriate, with a Northern Mesic Forest influence. Reconstructed presettlement vegetation types, mapped by Brewer (L. Brewer 1984), demonstrate that a Northern Coniferous Hardwood Forest was the former community designation for the wooded dunes here.

Telltale century-old, charred White Pine stumps, still present, testify to the existence of that bygone forest. The White Pine, Hemlock, Beech, and Sugar Maple that were dominating components are all locally dominant canopy species yet today. Also among the tree canopy, White Oak, Red Oak, Sassafras, and Black Cherry are now local dominants, along with less commonly found Black Oak, Tulip, Red Maple, Basswood, and White Ash.

- The forest understory dominants include the above canopy species, minus the oaks, with several additions: Eastern Redcedar, Hop-Hornbeam, Witch-hazel, Smooth Juneberry, and Sour-gum.

The most intriguingly unique and perplexing occurrence is that of at least fifty individual medium size Balsam Fir found along the crest of a wooded dune in the western part of the Boerma-Bittner parcel. The Michigan distribution for this species along the Lake starts a hundred or so miles north, in Mason County. The southernmost station is a sphagnum bog in Ingham County (Voss 1972). The trunk sizes here vary from one to six inches in diameter and are found in a natural formation (as opposed to row planting) in a natural climax wooded dune community setting. No cones were observed, but the grove appears to be viably regenerating.

- The shrub component is weak or nonexistent except locally where recent logging (~10 years ago) produced numerous sproutings from cutover stumps. The following shrub species are somewhat equally distributed in scattered locations: Common Juniper, Prickly Gooseberry, Low Sweet Blueberry, Velvet-leaf Blueberry, Hillside Blueberry, and Maple-leaved Viburnum. Dense and often impenetrable tangles of Greenbrier plague travel in some locations. Even equipped with numerous broad-based, piercing hooked thorns, deer browse is common.

- Ground cover is not greatly diversified nor abundant anywhere. Continuous grazing by deer may be one reason, or grazing from past farming activities (remnant barbed wire fencing was found in unexpected locations possibly indicating former "range grazing"). Evidence of fires occurring after the initial lumbering of the late 1800s can be seen by the charring found on some old pine stumps. Where fire gets hot enough, the heat is reported to "cook" the rootstock eliminating many carpets of ephemeral species often associated with the typical Mesic Forest in spring.

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This scenic view of Dunes Parkway is along Blue Star Memorial Highway. Photo by Nate Fuller.

Stewardship Network Connects to Southwest Michigan

“Partnering” is the buzz word among nonprofit organizations these days. The idea of a network among local conservation organizations was not new, but the timing was perfect.

The Stewardship Network started as the Southeast Michigan Stewardship Network in an effort to support the land management efforts of several conservation organizations. Because the idea was so popular, the Southeast Michigan Stewardship Network decided to expand their mission to include the entire state and became the Michigan Stewardship Network.

At the same time, several conservation organizations in southwest Michigan were having discussions about how to develop better partnerships. All it took was a couple phone calls and a brief meeting and it became obvious it was time for the Stewardship Network to expand to the west side of Michigan.

A meeting was held in the fall of 2005 and over 50 people representing 30 organizations met at the Kalamazoo Nature Center (KNC) to learn more about the Stewardship Network and discuss the creation of a southwest Michigan cluster. The common challenge of conservation organizations interested in sound land management is capacity and training. Together, as a network, organizations can address these challenges and leverage each others' resources and expertise to save time and money.

Members of this newly formed cluster of the Stewardship Network, the Southwest Corner Cluster, wasted no time jumping into projects together. Earth Day marked the first official Southwest Corner Cluster event, where SWMLC, KNC, and Western Michigan University (WMU) teamed up to lead a workday pulling garlic mustard from WMU's Kleinstuck Preserve, while numerous other partners like Wild Ones Native Landscapers, Michigan Nature Association (MNA), and Audubon Society of Kalamazoo headed up workdays elsewhere to help manage natural areas across the region.

During a planning meeting this spring, several partners lamented the limited funding they had for seasonal crews to do management. A plan quickly came together to pool the resources of Fort Custer Training Center's Environmental Program, KNC, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, MNA, and SWMLC to purchase equipment, hire a crew, and send them out to do ecological restoration work at a variety of natural areas.

The Southwest Corner Cluster is still in its beginning stages but is showing great promise as a resource for natural areas managers in southwest Michigan. Monthly workshops will be provided to cover such topics as prescribed fire, invasive species control, developing management plans, how to run a workday, and more. A contact list of natural resource professionals will

soon be available via the Stewardship Network website, so if you have a question about how to eradicate glossy buckthorn or need a speaker for a presentation on the effects of fire on wildflowers, for example, you will be able to search the database for a match.

Perhaps the greatest gift of the Stewardship Network is the knowledge that you aren't alone in your efforts to protect our natural heritage. Together, as we all do our part, we become greater than the sum of the parts. Visit the Stewardship Network's website to find out the latest information:

www.stewardshipnetwork.com.

— Nate Fuller



Nate Fuller shows volunteers of all ages how to identify garlic mustard, seen here at Kleinstuck Preserve in Kalamazoo. Photo by Erin Fuller.

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- One State-Listed bird (the Hooded Warbler) was observed.
- A total of 122 vascular plant species, including trees, shrubs, grasses, sedges, ferns, and other flowering plants, were inventoried. Of the 122 reproducing species, 11, or 9% of the total, are

non-native. This is considerably below the average for our state, since in Michigan 33% of our flora is non-native.

The data clearly demonstrate that the Dunes Parkway property is highly valuable as a natural component of the greater area landscape.

William Martinus has an M.A. from Grand Valley State University, and taught at both public and private schools for 30 years. Since 1994 he has worked as an environmental, ecological, and botanical consultant.

Conservation Celebration Focuses on Collaboration

Our Conservation Celebration and 11th Annual Meeting was held on April 27 and featured George Burgoyne, former resource management deputy of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). George spoke about the importance of collaboration between public and private entities to move conservation forward in the 21st century. Collaboration will be essential as urban sprawl and climate change make conservation management more difficult. George noted that the MDNR understands that effective conservation requires being open to new approaches, such as partnering with land conservancies. Together, public and private entities need to work together to develop a vision for southwest Michigan that will preserve our quality of life.

After Mr. Burgoyne's presentation, executive director Peter Ter Louw also talked about the importance of collaboration and partnerships — with landowners, donors, volunteers, other conservation organizations, educational institutions, and local, state and federal governments. He then described five projects that are part of our action plan for the coming year in which SWMLC



*George Burgoyne speaks to SWMLC members about partnerships.
Photo by Erin Fuller.*

will take a leadership role to move public conservation policies forward: the Paw Paw River Watershed Project, the Prairieville Creek Watershed Project, the Stewardship Network, Wau-Ke-Na, and a Mitchell's satyr purchase project. Peter concluded by thanking members for attending the meeting and supporting SWMLC's mission.

Business brought before SWMLC members included election of new board members Larry Sehy, retired from

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Foundation, Cindy Mills, molecular biologist at Kellogg Biological Station, and Dave Coleman, president of the Coleman Agency. Noel Hayward was reelected to the board of directors.

SWMLC treasurer Mary L. Houser reviewed the annual auditors' report for fiscal year 2004-2005.

Board member Alfred J. Gemrich recognized the contributions of retiring board members Jason Cherry, Tacie Draznin, Paul Olexia, and Russ Schipper, and thanked each of them for their dedication and service. They were presented with a resolution and framed botanical prints handcrafted by board member Stan Rajnak.

After the celebration, SWMLC's board of directors held a short meeting to elect officers. Betty Lee Ongley will continue serving as president, Ken Kirton was elected vice-president, Lois Jackson was elected secretary, and Mary L. Houser will continue serving as treasurer.

Refreshments were catered, thanks to generous support by American Village Builders.

— Julie Lewandowski

Announcing Our 2nd Annual Photo Contest

Vacationing close to home this summer? Remember to keep your camera handy to capture the perfect photo of southwest Michigan's local wild and scenic places — it could be the winner of SWMLC's 2nd Annual Photo Contest!

The contest will get underway this fall with a notice in our next newsletter. There will be two categories this year: (1) landscapes of southwest Michigan, and (2) flora and fauna (flowers and critters) of southwest Michigan.

The winning photos will appear in SWMLC's newsletter and will be posted on our website. So be on the lookout — that beautiful Lake Michigan sunset or the turtle sunning on a log could be a photo contest winner!

— Julie Lewandowski



This photo of a sunrise on Big Fish Lake in Marcellus was entered in last year's photo contest by Beth Sjo-Grondahl.

A Naturalist of One's Own Returns

SWMLC has restructured its popular Naturalist of One's Own program and is offering three field trips this summer and fall. What makes this fund-raising event unique is that you have the rare opportunity to visit a special place with an expert! Enjoying the undivided attention of a naturalist in a setting of your choice makes for a very personal outdoor experience. All field trips are limited in number of participants and are appropriate for adults only. All field trips will cost \$25 for non-members, \$15 for SWMLC members. A lunch or snack is included in the price of the trip. Carpooling will be available for all field trips.

To sign up for the field trip of your choice, call Pamela Larson at the SWMLC office. Sign up today — space is limited! Payment must be made in advance of the trip.

Field Trip #1 Saturday, July 29

The Botanical Beauty of Jephtha Lake Fen

9 a.m. to Noon

No summer would be complete without a visit to Jephtha Lake Fen. Purchased by SWMLC in 1997, this 49-acre preserve is home to all sorts of frogs, turtles, birds, and, of course, butterflies. Butterflies of all shapes and sizes. What butterfly can resist acres of blazing star in full bloom! William Martinus, ecologist and botanist, will lead a field trip for 7 to 10 people. Summer is the best time of year to see the glorious blazing star — a beautiful sight to behold from the boardwalk that leads into the fen (as seen in the photo below).

Field Trip #2 Saturday, September 23

The Hidden Treasures of Schultz Lake Preserve Conservation Easement

2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

This field trip offers a rare opportunity to enjoy a private property not usually open to the public. This spectacular 170-acre property was protected by a conservation easement in 2003. The property originally belonged to H. Lewis Batts, Jr., and was purchased after his death in order to protect it. Naturalist Christopher Nagy will lead participants through this property to discover the tranquility offered by the sweeping views of the lake, cool streams, and forested hillsides. Chris has led field trips for SWMLC's Naturalist of One's Own events in the past.

This field trip can accommodate 7 to 10 participants.

Field Trip #3 Saturday, October 21

Magnificent Mirror Valley

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Carpool from Kalamazoo at 9:30 a.m.

Lunch at 11 a.m.

Field trip from Noon to 2 p.m.

Mirror Valley is a beautiful little valley with a small stream that flows into the St. Joseph River. The 163-acre property is protected by a series of four phased conservation easements donated by Don and Marty Minter. Dr. Minter will be on hand to provide insight into the glacial history of this land and his work over the years to assemble the parcels that now comprise Mirror Valley Retreat.

William Minter will be there to highlight such things as the working landscape, land use history, and tree plantings that have been done successively since the 1940s. Bill is assistant professor of environmental science and director of land management at Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana.

Alex Bozymowski, NRCS District Conservationist for Cass County, and wife Kathy purchased one of the Minter Conservation Easement properties in 1996. Alex will be available to discuss the collaboration between the families and the Amigo Center and to describe what is involved in upholding the conservation values of the easement SWMLC holds on the property.

This field trip can accommodate up to 20 people.



Sunset falls gently on the quiet beauty of Jephtha Lake Fen. Photo by Kalman Csia.

Upcoming Workdays

RSVPs are needed for all workdays.

Prairie Restoration

Saturday, July 29

9 a.m. to Noon

Consumers Power Prairie, Kal. Co.

We will continue several years of effort to restore this property by removing invasive brush.

Bring: Work gloves and loppers. Wear sturdy shoes and long pants.

Directions: From US-131, exit at D Ave. Go east on D Ave. to 12th St. (the first stop). Head north on 12th St. to B Ave. and turn west. From Kalamazoo, go north on Douglas Ave. past Cooper Center to B Ave. Head west on B Ave. for 1¼ miles. The preserve is on the north side of B Ave., east of the US-131 overpass.

Carpool 8:30 a.m.*

Restore the Oak Opening

Sunday, August 13

1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Carter Lake Preserve, Barry Co.

Help restore oak woodlands and savanna habitat by removing invasive autumn olive.

Bring: Work gloves and loppers. Wear long sleeves and pants to protect against poison ivy. Waterproof boots might be needed, depending on rainfall.

Directions: Take M-43 to Hastings and follow it north out of the city. Turn east on Indian Hills Dr. Turn north on Country Club Dr. and look for the preserve sign at the intersection of Lakeside Dr. and Country Club Dr. Park along the side of the road on Lakeside Dr.

Carpool 11:45 a.m.*

Fens and Fields Workday

Saturday, August 26

9 a.m. to Noon

Jeptha Lake Fen, Van Buren Co.

The fens and fields at Jeptha need our help with removal of invasive brush.



Lupine is thriving at Chipman Preserve, thanks to the efforts of many community and SWMLC stewardship volunteers. Photo by Peter Ter Louw.

Bring: Work gloves and loppers. Wear sturdy shoes and long pants and sleeves to protect against poison ivy.

Directions: From M-43, take 50th St. north (about 4 miles west of Glendale and 4 miles east of Bangor). Go to 20th Ave./CR 380 (50th will jog slightly to the left before you reach 20th Ave.). Turn east onto 20th Ave./CR 380. When 20th Ave. turns at 49th St., continue straight ahead onto a gravel driveway and park in front of the yellow gate to your right in the yard. The preserve entrance is just beyond the yellow gate.

Carpool 8 a.m.*

Grasslands Restoration

Saturday, September 9

9 a.m. to Noon

Sand Creek Preserve, Kalamazoo Co.

We will be helping out the grassland birds by continuing restoration efforts of the prairie planting.

Bring: Work gloves and loppers. Wear sturdy shoes and long pants.

Directions: Take M-43 to N. 2nd St. Head north. The preserve is on the east side of the road, just south of the intersection of EF Ave. and 2nd St.

Carpool 8:30 a.m.*

Oak Savanna Workday

Saturday, October 21

9 a.m. to Noon

Chipman Preserve, Kalamazoo Co.

We will continue our restoration of the oak savannas and woodlands by removing invasive brush and trees.

Bring: Work gloves and loppers. Wear sturdy shoes and long pants and sleeves to protect against poison ivy.

Directions: Chipman Preserve is on the north side of E. Main St. about 3 miles east of Sprinkle Rd. and ½ mile west of 33rd St. Look for the preserve sign and gravel parking lot.

Carpool 8:30 a.m.*

**Kalamazoo Carpool Option: Meet at the Park & Ride at I-94 and Oakland Drive at time listed under workday or event. Call Nate Fuller at (269) 324-1600 by the Thursday before the workday if you intend to carpool.*

E-mail Nate Fuller at fuller@SWMLC.org if you would like to receive notification of these and other events.

And remember our Wednesday Workday Warriors reconnoiter every week!

Upcoming Events

Design Charrette Open House

Friday and Saturday, August 11-12

1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday

Wau-Ke-Na, William Erby Smith Preserve, Allegan County

Please join us for this open house event which will give the public an opportunity to offer design ideas for the use and management of Wau-Ke-Na. OCBA Architects, a firm that has earned national and state awards for their planning and design projects, will lead this design charrette. A charrette is a process of visual brainstorming used to develop solutions to a design challenge.

Directions: Wau-Ke-Na is situated 1 mile north of Glenn. From Hwy. 196/31, take the Glenn exit (exit 30) to Blue Star Memorial Hwy. (also County Road A2). Go southwest about ½ mile on Blue Star Hwy. to where 70th St. (Lakeshore Dr.) merges with Blue Star Hwy. Make a hard turn north onto 70th St. and go about ½ mile. The gravel entrance to the preserve will be on the west side of 70th St.

Chalk the Block on the Bluff

Saturday, August 12

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

St. Joseph, Berrien County

SWMLC will once again participate in St. Joseph Today's Chalk the Block on the Bluff event. Come see the streets of downtown Saint Joseph as they are transformed into works of art by a variety of artists. Enjoy the spectacular view of Lake Michigan from the bluff as you stroll among the artists and vendors. There's music, food, and fun for the kids, too.

Cheer and encourage our artist who will be chalking the block to raise donations for SWMLC. For more info, visit www.sjtoday.org.

10th Annual Picnic Potluck

Saturday, September 16

1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

SWMLC office at Prairie Edge Office Park

Portage, Kalamazoo County

Join us for our 10th Annual Picnic Potluck under the big white tent. We've changed the time and day this year to accommodate those who have had difficulty attending on a weekday night. This fun event is held every year solely to recognize our cadre of hard-working volunteers.

Please bring a dish to pass and your own table service. We'll provide beverages and fun! (SWMLC members will receive a reminder postcard in the mail soon.)

Three Rivers Fall Color Tour at Hidden Marsh Sanctuary

Sunday, October 8

Noon to 5 p.m.

Three Rivers, St. Joseph County

Don't miss this annual opportunity to see the golden splendor of Hidden Marsh during autumn! Last year over 90 people stopped by to enjoy cider and take a walk along the self-guided trails of this small but beautiful nature preserve.

We'll be there from Noon until 5 p.m.

CraneFest XII

Saturday and Sunday, October 14-15

Noon to 7 p.m.

Kiwanis Youth Area

Bellevue, Eaton County

The Greater Sandhill Crane is Michigan's tallest bird. It stands four to five feet and has a wing span of six to seven feet. And CraneFest is the place to see them!

The event begins at Noon and ends at 7 p.m. both days, with the best time for crane viewing after 4 p.m. You'll want to come early for the art show and sale, book signing, guided nature walks, food concessions, and more! A picnic area allows time to regroup and plan your day.

This fun-for-the-whole-family event is sponsored by the Michigan Audubon Society, Kiwanis Club of Battle Creek, and Binder Park Zoo.

Visit www.CraneFest.org for more information. And stop by SWMLC's tent while you're there!



Greater Sandhill Cranes are surrounded by nettles — ouch! This photo was taken by Jeff Freeman and entered in our 2005 photo contest. For information on our next photo contest, see page 10.

Thank you

Welcome and Thank You to Our New Members and Supporters January 16-May 31, 2006

Roger T. Barksdale
Ann G. Bennett
Jack Bley
Dan Collison and Elizabeth
Meister
Jim and Susan Cook
H&H Tree Transplanting, Inc.
Eric Hastings
Arnie and Debbie Johnston
Shirley Kerlikowske
Mary Beth Lake
Jani Meints
Wendy Morrison and Bruce
Cohen
William P. Rodgers
Lisa and Neil Schoenherr
Jane Steward
Ursula Storb
Dick and Margaret Tanner
Susan Ullig
Virginia M. Van Dalson
Kal Vander Zwaag
Delaina Wilkin
Gerald Wisner
Jaime Wood

Thanks also to all who renewed
their membership, supported us
through the United Way, and
contributed to our annual cam-
paign and year-end appeal.

Our sincere apologies for any
omissions.

Leadership Contributions

The people and organizations
listed below made significant
contributions to support
SWMLC's program, land acqui-
sition, stewardship, monitoring,
and endowment funds. We
thank them for their generosity
and support.

Frank D. Ballo
Sherwood and Sharon
Boudeman
ConAgra Foods
Florence F. Goodyear

Blake Hawk/Edwards Industrial
Sales
Ladies' Library Association
Charles and Phyllis LaVene
George and Linda Markham
Andrejs Purmalis
Lawrence Sehy
William Erby Smith
Foundation
Virginia M. Van Dalson
Mrs. Vera M. Wallach

Matching Gifts

The organizations listed below
made matching gifts on behalf
of SWMLC members.

Denso Manufacturing
Michigan, Inc.
ExxonMobil Foundation
IBM International Foundation
Pfizer Foundation

Business Supporters

American Village Builders

Gifts

Donations were made in honor of:

Mrs. Dorothy Adams
Caroline and Keith Martin
Mrs. Madalene Martin
Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Rhodes
Thank you for sharing the land!
by Joan Orman and Eric Bekker

Kristi Chapman
by Betty Lee Ongley

In celebration of Keith and
Jeanne Frey's 50th wedding
anniversary
by The Blondia Family

Marilyn Gosling's birthday
by Bruce Gosling

Christine Hann
by William and Emma Hann

Mary Meader's 90th Birthday
by Emma Bickham Pitcher

In celebration of Betty Lee
Ongley's 80 years
by Elizabeth S. Fernandez
Larry and Noel Hayward
Ken and Marlena Kirton

Gift memberships were given to:

Jani Meints
from Penny Meints

Wood Lake Scout Reservation
from Timothy F. Armstrong

In-Kind Contributions

Dr. Donald E. Harrell
donated an 8'x4' conference
table.
Stan Rajnak donated hand-
pressed botanical notecards
and framed wall prints.

Honorariums

In appreciation for programs
given by *Nate Fuller* and *Peter*
Ter Louw, honorariums were
donated by the Asylum Lake
Preservation Association and
Chapter EZ of the P.E.O.
Sisterhood.

Memorial Contributions

The following gifts were made
in memory of:

Eric C. Allen
by Gloria Bach and
Frank La Fond
Dorothy D. Canevari
Erin Cody
The Gesenhues Family
Paul and Barbara McNulty
Clarence C. Smith

Ted Corakis
by Phil and Judy Willson

Juanita Hayward
by Ken and Alice Jones
Pamela and Lee Larson

Gary Padley
by Betty and John Bennett

Kathryn Sehy
by Larry and Noel Hayward
Ken and Marlena Kirton
Pamela and Lee Larson
Staff of SWMLC

William Erby Smith
by ConAgra Foods

Richard Paul Weaver
by Kalman and Becky Csia
Larry and Noel Hayward
Jody Simoes and Katie Kahl

*Our hearts go out to board mem-
ber Noel Hayward and husband*
Larry and family for the passing
of Larry's mother, Juanita.

Eric Curt Allen

SWMLC joins with
friends and family of Eric
Curt Allen in mourning his
passing on April 4.

Eric grew up on the
beaches of southwest
Michigan in Sawyer, and it
was his most favorite place
in the whole world, accord-
ing to Eric's widow, Amy.

Tower Hill won't be the
same without Eric. He will
be missed.

As this newsletter went to press,
donations were arriving in mem-
ory of David Braymer of
Vicksburg who passed away on
June 14. We send our deepest
condolences to Dave's family and
friends. Their gifts in his honor
will appear in our next
newsletter.

Planning and Organizing for a Future of Conservation Success

This issue of *Landscapes* highlights our work along the Lake Michigan shoreline to protect and steward wildlife habitat. It also showcases our collaborative watershed management projects which will lead, in time, to conserving aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. All of these efforts are based on understanding and analyzing the resources, developing appropriate conservation strategies, and setting priorities.

This spring, SWMLC started two multi-year watershed management projects with a committee of local stakeholders to develop a conservation plan that will identify and protect critical areas of water resources in the Black River and Paw Paw River Watersheds. Once these critical areas are identified, we will begin a landowner outreach program, contacting property owners to educate them on the importance of land conservation.

These current efforts build upon our past work in the Dowagiac River Watershed, the Galien River, the lower Paw Paw River, Rice Creek and Battle Creek Watersheds, and the Four Townships area that includes the Augusta Creek and Gull Lake Watersheds. These are areas where we are currently working to safeguard head-

water wetlands, floodplain forests, lakes, and streams.

Our recent work has made SWMLC one of the fastest-growing land trusts in Michigan. But with growth comes some important questions, such as, "What is the best way to fund continued growth? How do we add new preserves, yet ensure that existing preserves are well-maintained? How do we identify the best opportunities to protect land and water resources in the years ahead?" For us, these are more than academic questions. How we answer them will determine the way we preserve natural and scenic areas in the nine counties we serve.

To respond to these challenges, this fall SWMLC will undertake a Board of Directors and staff strategic planning session to develop a conservation plan and identify the organizational and financial resources necessary to implement this vision.

The SWMLC Board has hired a conservation planning consultant, ConservationImpact, to facilitate the process that

will begin in early September and end with a strategic plan by mid-December.

The creation of a conservation plan is the final step in a process that will organize, improve, and grow SWMLC to meet the ever-increasing challenges of land protection and stewardship in southwest Michigan. If we are to create long-term strategies for the survival of the Mitchell's satyr butterfly, for protection of habitat for migratory birds, and for the management of unique ecosystems such as forested dunes and southern floodplain forests, SWMLC, along with our partners, must plan and organize for the future.

— Peter Ter Louw



*This headwaters wetland contains springs and seeps that are the source of Prairieville Creek.
Photo by Peter Ter Louw.*

Be Part of the 2006 J.A. Woollam Foundation Challenge

Leadng conservationist, Dr. John A. Woollam, has once again offered the challenge of a matching grant to SWMLC through the J.A. Woollam Foundation of Lincoln, Nebraska.

The focus of this second challenge will be new members: the grant will match dollar for dollar every new

member donation made to SWMLC earmarked for the Woollam Challenge up to a maximum of \$5,000 in donations through December 31, 2006.

Dr. Woollam has generously supported our fund-raising efforts in the past. In 2005, thanks to all of you, we more than met his challenge, far exceeding the \$5,000 goal.

Let's see if we can do equally well again this year — and introduce some new members to SWMLC at the same time!

Ask your friends and family if they are SWMLC members. If not, encourage them to join now and be part of the J.A. Woollam Foundation Challenge for 2006!

A Naturalist of One's Own Returns!

SWMLC has restructured its Naturalist of One's Own program and will be offering three field trips this summer and fall. All field trips are limited in number of participants and are for adults only. All field trips will cost \$25 for non-members, \$15 for SWMLC members. A lunch or snack is included in the price of each trip. Carpooling will be available for all field trips.

To sign up for the field trip of your choice, call Pamela Larson at the SWMLC office. Sign up today — space is limited! Payment must be made in advance of the trip.

The field trips are as follows.

Field Trip #1. *The Botanical Beauty of Jephtha Lake Fen*. Saturday, July 29. 9 a.m. to Noon. Carpool at 8 a.m. from Kalamazoo. Blazing star and butterflies

abound at this Van Buren County nature preserve. William Martinus will lead this event.

Field Trip #2. *The Hidden Treasures of Schultz Lake Preserve Conservation Easement*. Saturday, September 23. 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Carpool from Kalamazoo at 1 p.m. Tour this private property with naturalist Christopher Nagy.

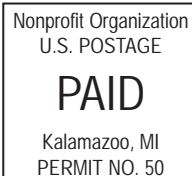
Field Trip #3. *Magnificent Mirror Valley*. Saturday, October 21. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Carpool from Kalamazoo at 9:30 a.m. Lunch at 11 a.m. Field trip from Noon to 2 p.m. Dr. Donald Minter, William Minter, and Alex Bozymowski share their knowledge and expertise.

Turn to page 11 for complete details. Call today to reserve your special spot!



Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy
6851 S. Sprinkle Road
Portage, MI 49002-9708

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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Ken Kirton, *Vice-President*
Mary L. Houser, *Treasurer*
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Peter D. Ter Louw
Executive Director

Pete DeBoer
Land Protection Specialist

Nate Fuller
Conservation and Stewardship Director

Pamela Weaver Larson
Communications Director and Newsletter

Julie Lewandowski
Administrative Assistant and Web Site

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, Inc., is a nonprofit corporation (FEIN 38-3038708; MICS 10463). For more information:

Write: SWMLC, 6851 S. Sprinkle Rd., Portage, MI 49002-9708.

Call: (269) 324-1600.
Fax: (269) 324-9760.

E-mail: ConserveLand@SWMLC.org.
Web site: www.SWMLC.org.