



## Trainings, Events, and Work Days

### Woollam Family Preserve Trail Building, Cross Village

Saturday, April 9 10am - 4pm

Join us in finishing the trail system at this beautiful preserve from M-119 through forested sand dunes to the Lake Michigan shore. Bring a brown bag lunch, gloves, and wear sturdy footwear. Water and snacks will be provided. Stay all day or just a couple of hours. Call to let us know if you can make it.

### EcoStewards Spring Kick Off

Saturday, April 23, 2016 11am-1pm

Carnegie Building, 461 E. Mitchell St., Petoskey

Who are EcoStewards? A Volunteer Program to Engage Field-Based Volunteers. We provide the framework, land, training, and learning opportunities. You explore, collect, research, restore, and share your results with us. Join us to kick off the field season with a gathering of other volunteers. You can sign up for an EcoSteward project, have lunch, and learn about Michigan reptiles and amphibians with guest speaker, David Mifsud. We will head to a local vernal pool after Dave's presentation to see these creatures in their natural habitat. David is a certified professional wetland scientist and an authority in Michigan on conservation and management of amphibians and reptiles.



### Vernal Pool Monitoring Training

Saturday, April 23 1:30 - 3:30pm, (after EcoStewards Kick Off)  
Offield Nature Preserve

A unique opportunity to visit a local vernal pool with a visiting vernal pool expert! We will learn from Dave why vernal pools are so ecologically important and why they need our attention and citizen science efforts. Learn how to monitor the aquatic life and ecology of these pools as an EcoSteward volunteer with LTC. Feel free to join us for an educational hike even if you are not interested in monitoring a vernal pool.

### McCune Preserve Trail Improvements, Petoskey

Saturday April 30 9am - 4pm

Plan to carry a shovel and help rebuild a segment of trail, address erosion and clean up some old glass. Please bring work gloves and a brown bag lunch. Water and snacks will be provided. Come for an hour or stay all day. Please call to let us know you can make it.

### 2016 BioBlitz

Susan Creek Nature Preserve, Charlevoix  
Friday and Saturday June 10 & 11

Little Traverse Conservancy will partner with naturalists, professional biologists, and area citizens to document the diversity of plants and animals at the Susan Creek Nature Preserve through a 24-hour BioBlitz. Learn about birds, salamanders, moths, invertebrates, wetland plants, and more through a scheduled hike or drop-in any time to do scavenger hunts and other family activities. A \$2,000 grant from Great Lakes Energy will allow for the purchase of materials.

*"If you truly love nature, you find beauty everywhere"*

Vincent Van Gogh

## Vernal Pool Monitors Needed



### Monitors needed at:

- Chaboiganing Preserve in Brutus
- Goodhart Farms in Good Hart
- Hymas Woods Preserve in Alanson
- Offield Preserve in Harbor Springs
- Susan Creek Preserve in Charlevoix

Call Cacia at 231.347.0991.



A newsletter for Preserve Volunteers, Trail Stewards, and Project Volunteers of the Little Traverse Conservancy

### VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## Darrell Lawson

Volunteer field trip leader, Ransom Preserve Trail Steward, Kestrel Nest Box Monitor at Undine Preserve, stewardship trail blazer, special event volunteer, volunteer photographer, and president of the Petoskey Regional Audubon Society.

When I first began volunteering with the LTC, I was looking for some perspective in my life. Things had not gone according to plan and now I was unsure of myself and wondering what would come next. During my childhood I had spent a great amount of time running around outdoors, but as I got older that had changed. So, looking for direction in my life, I decided to start spending more time outdoors again. Having LTC preserves nearby helped immensely. In a very short period of time, I discovered birding (with binoculars, not a gun) and became involved with the Petoskey Regional Audubon Society. That's how I learned about the LTC's new program to install and monitor American Kestrel nest boxes and decided to attend a training event for the program.

Out of this first experience with the LTC, I came away monitoring two nest boxes and volunteering to monitor and clean up trails at a local preserve. I loved these duties. Not only was I helping the LTC, but I was able to do work that kept me outdoors, as opposed to my full time career as a software engineer. Within that first year, I would be elected President of the Petoskey Regional Audubon Society. It seemed natural at that point for our two organizations to partner on field trips to their preserves. These partnership events have led to some of my best experiences over the last few years. Sometimes it has been showing a field trip participant an Indigo Bunting for the first time - frequently that person had been hoping to see one for years. Other times it has been simply standing in front of a group to teach them the principles of birding. One moment that particularly jumps to mind was on a field trip last spring at the Waldron Fen when a Sora suddenly burst forth in song. A Sora's song is a sort of descending whinny that almost sounds like laughter. The person walking beside me had never heard a Sora before and her face broke into a sudden smile followed by her own laughter. I've always enjoyed hearing Soras, so it was great to see someone else have the same response that I do every time that I hear one. Volunteering also gives me the opportunity to work with the wonderful LTC staff. They are great people who are working hard to protect the land we all love so much. If you haven't met any of them, you should!

Those are the kind of experiences that define what volunteering with the LTC means to me. It's the opportunity to show others the birds, other wildlife, and land that I have come to love so much. It is also the knowledge that by volunteering with them, I am playing my own small part in helping to preserve the land that those birds need in order to survive for generations to come. Moreover, I know that I am helping to ensure that the preserves will be there years from now for those, who like me, might need somewhere to get away and look for a little perspective.

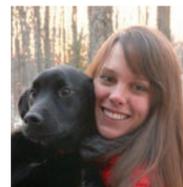


Darrell Lawson while birding on Beaver Island.

County	# Preserves	Acres
Charlevoix	49	2,856
Cheboygan	26	1,998
Chippewa & Luce	21	2,974
Emmet	77	4,426
Mackinaw	14	3,199
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>15,203</b>

Nature Preserves by County as of March 2016

## Stew Crew 2016



Caitlin Donnelly  
Land Protection and Stewardship Specialist



Derek Shiels  
Conservation Easement Specialist



Mike Lynch  
Preserve Specialist



Cacia Lesh  
Volunteer Coordinator



Charles Dawley  
Preserve/GIS Specialist



Kieran Fleming  
Director of Stewardship

## Save the Date

Stewardship Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon  
Saturday, June 25, 10am - 1pm  
Camp Sea-Gull on Lake Charlevoix  
Hike at Driggers Nature Preserve

A formal invitation with details will be mailed!



## 2015 Volunteer Pics and Projects



*Ayla Shiels* is possibly our youngest volunteer. At 6 years old, she monitors invasive species, kestrels, and vernal pools with her family. Last year was her first year with LTC as a volunteer, and we hope that she continues to explore the natural world as an EcoStewards volunteer for years to come.



For three summers in a row *Cameron Stewart* has volunteered with LTC. With help from family, they spent 68 hours together repairing and power washing boardwalks at the McCune and Raunecker Preserves and worked on trail building projects at McCune. They volunteer as part of their service learning for high school. Cameron is in his senior year of high school, so we congratulate him on his upcoming graduation and hope he and his family continue to volunteer as EcoStewards.

*Jim and Wendy Bean* (on right) have been volunteers with the kestrel program since it began. They have given numerous presentations, field trips, and built and installed many boxes all over our service area. Here they are seen with American Kestrel Partnership program director Delora Hilleary (visiting all the way from Idaho!) at our community kestrel presentation last spring in Petoskey.



*Graham Peters* is a student at LSSU studying fisheries and wildlife management. He spent time with LTC last summer identifying and mapping invasives. He is also a volunteer Frog and Toad Survey route monitor with LTC. He plans to do his senior project studying reptiles and amphibians on LTC nature preserves in 2016.



### New Preserve to Visit Woollam Family Nature Preserve

Located just south of Cross Village, this new 62-acre preserve protects a half-mile of M-119's "Tunnel of Trees" and sensitive Lake Michigan sand dunes. A small parking area off M-119 affords access to a half mile of trail through forested sand dunes and steep hills to the beach. "This is one of the most significant Great Lakes shoreline projects in the history of the Conservancy," states Tom Bailey, LTC Executive Director. The Woollam Family Preserve protects almost a half-mile of Lake Michigan shoreline and almost all of its acreage is characterized as critical dune area. A great place for a summer hike and beach picnic!

Woollam Family Nature Preserve/Todd Parker



## Connections Through Citizen Science

*"Citizen science is fundamentally about participation within and for communities."*

*Angela M. Calabrese Barton*

by Volunteer Coordinator *Cacia Lesh*

Nature preserves are a way to protect land from development and a way to offer open space for people to explore and wildlife to roam. LTC seeks a balance between offering access to trails and exciting natural features and protecting high quality habitat for rare plants and animals. Although these two goals are separate, there is much interface. In every microcosm of every preserve, things are alive. And every person's visit to a nature preserve brings opportunities for contact with a myriad of living things. Citizen science, described as collaborations between scientists and volunteers, is an exciting new vehicle for observing this interface and learning more about the complexities between people and the natural living community. Would the turtle have enjoyed the sun a little while longer had we not disturbed its resting place on the submerged log? Would the deer have grazed a little while longer if we had kept our distance?

This interface can be full of discovery for the preserve visitor - both personally and externally. It can be full of wonder, insight, and adventure. It is what LTC seeks to facilitate as stewards of the land we protect. With society's strong emphasis on people and technology, looking closely at one's relationship with other living creatures in nature can be nourishing. Taking the time to crouch down and look at the world beneath our feet - the ant in the grass or the frog in the mud, maybe even taking a magnifying glass and looking deeper at the underside of a leaf - can afford the chance to connect at a level we often don't see.

Engaging in a citizen science effort can prompt self-investigation, allowing us to explore our relationship with our environment. It can give us the feeling that we are not alone in our efforts to succeed. It encourages people of all ages to ask "why" and search a little deeper for meaning. It even promotes the understanding that we might have something in common with other living creatures, however different we look on the outside. In the study of a vernal pool, we may find 300 species that depend on a unique two-acre wetland!

Citizen science is a kind of service learning. When done in collaboration with an organization like LTC, the effort of

learning provides hard data that improves our ability to manage our preserves and enhances the experience of the volunteer. We find that community members are excited to engage in something intentional with a tangible result. We want these opportunities to inspire community members to ask questions they hadn't thought to ask, to initiate their own scientific experience and direct their learning through self-study and motivation. When learning is self-driven it is powerful; it is more often shared with peers and wholly understood by the citizen scientist. Many times the citizen scientist becomes the teacher when sharing their experiences and revelations from field work. This empowers peers to inspire and motivate each other.

A wonderful example is LTC's kestrel project where 49 volunteers observe nest boxes during spring and summer. They begin with enthusiasm but when they don't have kestrels nest in their boxes they feel disheartened. If no bird life is seen at a kestrel box, the effort seems futile, and without purpose. However when that information is relayed to the national organization running the study, the American Kestrel Partnership (AKP), then we are part of a larger community. We hear about other volunteers' experiences with nesting birds, and the role of the volunteer takes on greater meaning.

Here, LTC provides a connection to the community of volunteers who observe nest boxes. We facilitate story-telling, picture-sharing, and we invite volunteers to a gathering where we summarize and analyze the AKP data. For many, this type of community connection is the most important part of citizen science, and for LTC it is essential.

Through these citizen science projects, LTC hopes to strengthen our community. By supporting environmental education through independent projects in continuing adult education or personal interest, or projects tailored for a specific classroom, we hope to be an active participant in enhancing the communities in our region. Through free community events and field trips we look to provide in-depth science education by engaging professional scientists in community service. The more time people spend on our nature preserves, the more time they have to pause and connect with something greater than themselves, something outside of themselves, whose quality of life may depend on the steps they take along the trail.

### Kestrel Nest Box Monitoring Update

Last year 36 volunteers monitored 30 nest boxes. Seven were used by kestrels.

- Darnton Preserve in Boyne City, eggs never hatched.
- Goodhart Farms in Good Hart (two separate boxes had nests), six chicks banded and fledged successfully.
- A conservation easement along US-31 in Charlevoix, eggs preyed upon before hatching.
- A conservation easement in Cheboygan County, unknown outcome of eggs, if hatched and fledged or preyed upon.

### Kestrel Monitors Needed

- Black Forest Farm, Harbor Springs
- Conservation Easement in East Jordan
- Conservation Easement in Harbor Springs
- Hanel Preserve, Wolverine
- MacDonald Preserve, Harbor Springs
- Marchio Preserve, East Jordan
- Niiwin Ziingaak Preserve, Brutus



Black Hole Preserve kestrel chicks/Lynn Walters Frazee