

EcoStewards Calling all Citizen Scientists!

New Program Makes it Easier than Ever to
Help LTC in the Field

Are you a nature enthusiast? Is there some Thoreau in you? Maybe you just like to spend time outside—All are welcome and encouraged to sign up as a volunteer for Little Traverse Conservancy's new EcoStewards program! Volunteer activities and projects will be driven by you, the volunteer. We will provide the framework, land, and training and learning opportunities, and you will explore, collect, research, restore, and share your results with us. You get to learn a new skill or maybe just have an extra excuse to get outside, and we get valuable information about our preserves that will help us be better stewards of the diversity and beauty within LTC's nature preserves.

What exactly will EcoSteward volunteers do?

How about conducting surveys for frogs and toads after learning the calls of all 13 Michigan species, or taking GPS points of invasive plants on an LTC preserve after completing a course on identifying invasive plants? Some activities will require that you attend a training event, like monitoring vernal pools, others will not, like planting native shrubs or pulling invasive garlic mustard plants. We have some key projects that we are seeking volunteers for like our Kestrel box monitoring, but we are also encouraging volunteers to submit their own ideas to us. Do you have a skill set or an interest that you'd like to explore?



Scotch pine removal at McCune



Spotted knapweed removal crew at Vermilion Point Preserve

Learn more

We are excited for this fresh opportunity to partner with citizens interested in conserving and monitoring the natural resources of northern Michigan. Please join us on April 11 for an introduction to the EcoStewards program as we kickoff a new flurry of volunteer activity and nature observation on LTC preserves! Come and learn more about how the program will work and how you can sign up as a team or an individual. There will be a strolling lunch and poster reception; come see how high school students explain the value of protecting northern Michigan's wildlands and creatures.

SPECIAL Invasive Species Training Opportunity

After the April 11 luncheon, LTC staff will be holding the first EcoSteward training event for those interested in learning how to identify and map invasive plants. See below for more. Registration appreciated.

EcoStewards Kickoff Event & Training Opportunity

When: Saturday, April 11, 2015
Where: Carnegie Building, behind Crooked Tree Arts Center, 461 East Mitchell St., Petoskey
Time: 11am – 1pm Kickoff Event
 1-3 pm Invasive Species Training Session

RSVP to cacia@landtrust.org, 231.347.0991 or online at www.landtrust.org.

Unable to attend the Kickoff event? You can sign up to be an EcoSteward online at www.landtrust.org. Follow dropdown menu under "Volunteer."

If you are interested in attending just the Invasive Species training session on April 11, you can register online or by calling Cacia at 231.347.0991.

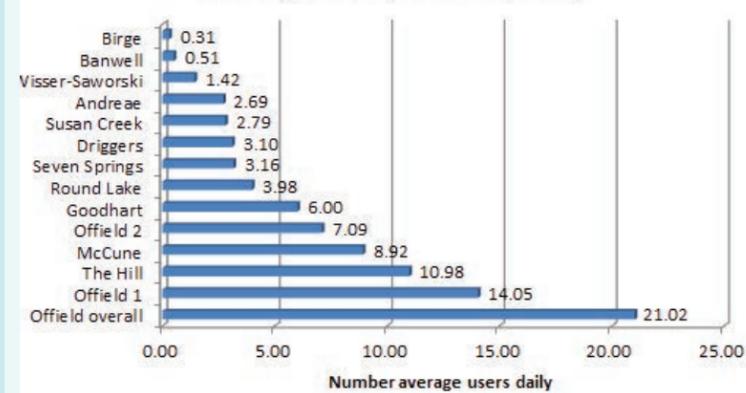
Focus on Trail Usage

In an effort to maximize preserve use and enjoyment by the communities in our service area, LTC has begun to look more closely at the use of our nature preserve trails and dedicate more time in opening preserves for winter access. At 12 preserves, we installed motion sensor trail cameras this winter. Below is some information we gathered from these cameras from December 2014 through mid-March 2015. Looking at this data will enable us to provide access to the most popular preserves and toward popular recreational uses.

In addition, this winter we purchased a snowmobile and trail grooming equipment to open more preserves for groomed cross country skiing. Despite the bitter cold months of January and February, many people avoided cabin fever by getting outside in nature to ski on these groomed trails.



Average Daily Traffic (ADT)



We saw an average of 6 users per day across all 12 preserves: low of one user every 3.3 days; high of 21 users per day (Offie Nature Preserve).

- Total number of preserve guests counted for winter 2014-15 was 3,816.

- We didn't always catch feet in the camera shots but when we did we were able to distinguish between skiers, snowshoers, hikers, and bikers.

- 175 fat bikers on seven of the 12 preserves (39 of these were from the fat bike tire event at the The Hill Preserve).
- 94% of the guests at Goodhart Farms Preserve were cross-country skiers.
- At Driggers, 24% were skiers, 38% used snowshoes, 16% hiked, and there was one biker.
- At McCune most of the guests were hiking over the winter season—58%, with almost 42% using snowshoes.

- Weekend numbers were higher except at the Round Lake Preserve.



Sam Bailey and Brandon Goldsmith help Eagle Scout candidate Zach Hunt (middle) build deck supports at the Hailand Preserve deck in 2014.

2015 Stewardship Volunteer Work Days

Help us spread the word! We will be having additional pop-up work days than those listed below. For notification, be sure to get on our Volunteer email list by contacting Cacia at 231.347.0991.

Watson/Schott Preserve Complex Trail Clearing Day Friday, May 22 10am

We will supply trail clearing tools, snacks, and water. For more details or to sign up to help, please contact Mike Lynch at 231.347.0991.

McCune Lumber Haul Friday, June 12 1pm

We are looking for a few strong bodies who can help us move lumber for building new boardwalk at the McCune Preserve in Emmet County. Please call Charles at 231.347.0991 if you can help!

Bird photos taken by Volunteer Trail Steward Darrell Lawson



Cape May Warbler/South Round Lake Preserve



Magnolia Warbler/South Round Lake Preserve



Merlin/Raunecker Preserve

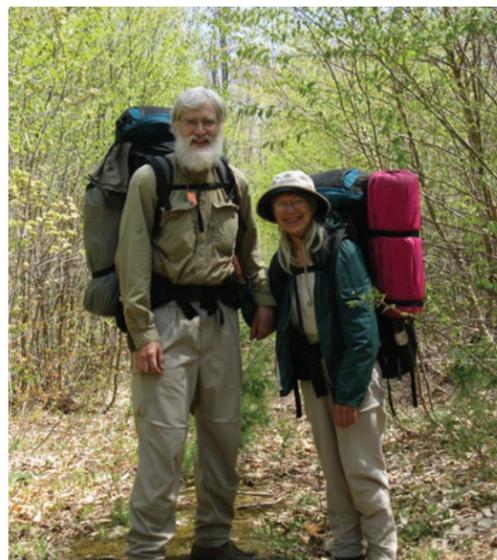
Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

Saturday, June 13
Burt Lake Community Club, Alanson
A formal invitation with details will be mailed!

A few preserve stats:

Total miles of trails on LTC preserves - 106
Preserve Management Units - 184
Acres protected - 51,461
Waterfront/Shoreline protected - 144 miles
Trail Stewards - 57
Preserve Monitors - 122

"Set your life on fire. Seek those who fan your flames."
~Jalal ad-Din Rumi



Dale Petty and Jeannine Palms. Jeannine donated the Ginny Palms Preserve and she and Dale serve as preserve monitors and trail stewards at the preserve.

Special Focus for Volunteers



iNaturalist

Share Your Plant and Animal Sightings at iNaturalist.org!

Through your trail clearing and preserve monitoring efforts we learn a lot about the preserves we protect. We invite you to join iNaturalist.org, where you can record what you see on our nature preserves, meet other nature lovers in northern Michigan, and learn more about the natural world around you. Your time volunteering is important in many ways. To make your time even more valuable, search the "project" Little Traverse Conservancy on the iNaturalist website. This is a fun way to explore what is around us all. There is also a smart phone app which allows you to upload your observations (photos and species) directly from the field.



NYC high school interns participating in The Nature Conservancy's L.E.A.F (Leaders in Environmental Action for the Future) Program visit Aldo Leopold Preserve and help with trail building on the Island, along with other projects on TNC properties in Les Cheneaux, summer 2014.

Volunteer Steward Newsletter

April 2015

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



Raccoon at Black Hole Preserve/Lynn Waitels-Fraze

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Lisa Morris

Lisa Morris has an adventurous spirit. She also has a generous nature and an infectious enthusiasm for being outdoors. Almost everything Lisa does in her time away from work is to help her relax and regenerate and connect with nature.

Lisa chose to live in Michigan - twice. Fifteen years ago, working as a computer software programmer in Texas, Lisa was one of the first to volunteer for a transfer to Michigan. She was relocated to Flint where she was happy to be in the temperate climate of the north. She and her husband, Bill, planted 1000 pine trees on their 7 acre farm to invite nature into their domain.

Lisa has always been deeply connected to water having grown up in Milwaukee near Lake Michigan and vacationed at a rustic cabin in northern Wisconsin. She feels the "magnetic pull" of the Great Lakes wherever she travels in her work, and uses this pull to navigate her way, literally and figuratively, through life. Her parents instilled in her a sense of comfort in the outdoors through family vacations to the north woods of Wisconsin. She and her cousins spent time playing in the woods, fishing and observing wildlife around the cabin. They visited otter ponds, took day hikes, and kept track of snakes in the woodpile. The outdoors was their playground.

When her husband retired from the police force in Flint, Lisa and Bill decided to move north for a second time. Bill said he would live anywhere near water and with a boat, so they began looking at real estate near Traverse City. While house hunting in TC, a listing in Harbor Springs caught Lisa's eye. With no luggage or plan to travel that far north, Lisa started the next adventure of her life. That night

This year, we introduce volunteer Lisa Morris who donates her time as a preserve monitor and at preserve work days.



Lisa Morris shown holding a walking stick at the 2013 Volunteer Appreciation Event hike on Marquette Island.

she drove to Harbor Springs, slept in her van at a state park and woke up disheveled, but excited. She fell in love with a house for sale on a bluff in Harbor Springs, the view, the many opportunities to hike at nature preserves, eat good food, and enjoy the cultural opportunities for arts and music, such as Blissfest.

From that moment 15 years ago, Lisa and Bill invested themselves in this community, becoming involved in local efforts to restore the historic red schoolhouse at Five Mile Creek and joining LTC as members. She has been a Preserve Monitor at the Arbaugh, Dean, Pack, Sharpe and Hansen Preserve since it was established in 2010. Lisa enjoys connecting with like-minded people on LTC field trips, and walking her dogs on nature trails. When at home in Harbor Springs, she visits rivers and lakes at her favorite preserves: the Minnehaha Creek at the McCune Preserve, Oden Island Preserve on the Inland Waterway, and the Grass River Natural Area in Bellaire where she can watch nesting birds among the marsh grasses.

Lisa's generosity goes beyond preserve monitoring. For a number of years she has offered affordable housing for LTC interns and AmeriCorps Service members. She rescues older and injured Brittany Spaniels and gives them the love and care they need, and has been seen clearing trails and hauling trash at other LTC work bees. When she retires, she and her husband plan to build a cabin on their 40 acres in Brimley near the Iroquois Island Nature Preserve.

Although we wish her a dream cabin and wonderful retirement in the UP, we at LTC are planning on keeping Lisa's generosity and smiling face on our preserves as much as possible and long into the future.