

# Making Trails Better

by Kieran Fleming, Director of Stewardship and Land Protection



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Hikers at Elmer Johnston Preserve/Todd Parker

In 2015 the Conservancy began taking stock to help the organization determine our preserve management priorities. We realized we needed to learn more about how much and what type of use occurs at our nature preserves.

Using trail cameras, we learned that we had more than 32,000 visits to just 34 of our nature preserves in 2015! Considering the fact that LTC now owns nearly 350 nature preserves (roughly 200 management complexes) with more than 107 miles of trails, this number would be greatly expanded if extrapolated to all of our preserves with trails.

The cameras also gave us information that was extremely helpful for understanding trail access patterns. For example, it became clear that we can greatly expand on the public use of our preserves by facilitating winter use. The simple acts of plowing a parking area and packing the trail encourages use from snowshoers, cross country skiers, and the increasing number of fat tire bikers in the region. In many cases, the use alone is enough to pack these trails systems so they can be used without snowshoes in the winter for hiking.

So, in 2016, we have been “upping the game.” With a new snow machine purchased last year with grants from the Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation and Chemical Bank, we were poised to do much more with winter trails. Trails were prepared last fall, and we increased the number of parking areas to be plowed and groomed. While we are still collecting data, we are already seeing a great increase in winter public use as a result of this effort.

The staff has embraced promoting and encouraging winter use of LTC trails, and we have been pleased with user feedback (*see page 5 for Love Notes from the Trail*). With the length of our winters up here, this is what northern Michigan is all about! It's a great way to get outside in

nature in a manner that encourages fitness and appreciation for the natural world. The snow reveals tracks of the wild ones who stay around to tough out the winter. The reduced foliage allows you to see the beauty of our landscape through a different lens. The early dark and clear cold are ideal for stargazing.

We hope that our efforts complement and provide synergy for the many private options for outdoor recreation available at local ski resorts and other businesses. These places will often provide a higher attention to grooming conditions than we can, but LTC provides a number of options across our service area.

For example, at the Banwell Preserve you will get breathtaking views of the Pigeon River and may see otter or mink tracks along its banks. At Goodhart Farms, you may see the tracks of coyote, bobcat, and weasel, or hear the calls of the owls that are starting to mate in this season. We believe our trails offer one more incentive for tourists to come and enjoy what this beautiful region has to offer. We also hope they serve our “locals” by giving them another option close to home.

A lot of time and thought has gone into determining where and how trail use should be promoted, and it is an ever evolving, dynamic process. Typically, trail grooming is done on existing trail systems. And, with the snow pack, there is actually less disturbance of the soil even than what normal foot trails might inflict in the summer months. We are constantly learning.

No matter what your preferred non-motorized mode of transportation is, we encourage you to get out on our preserves! Visit our web page, Facebook page, or our free app for current trail conditions. Please let us know about your experiences on our preserves and remember to keep the dogs on a leash.\*

*\*Dogs are not allowed at Waldron Fen.*

Fawn captured on trail camera at Gauthier Preserve



# 2015 in Review

The Little Traverse Conservancy (LTC) worked with land owners, park agencies and resource management agencies to dedicate 2,447 acres of land in its five-county service area to conservation for the public, including two miles of water frontage.

**A NEW TYPE OF PROTECTED LAND:** Included among the 2015 projects was the establishment of Working Forest Reserves, a new class of properties that will stand beside the Conservancy's well-known system of Nature Preserves. Working Forest Reserves have come to LTC enrolled in the Michigan Commercial Forest Program (CFP), dedicated to providing a sustainable and environmentally appropriate stream of forest products to promote economic prosperity and sound resource management across the North. These Conservancy lands receive the same treatment by local and state government as private CFP lands. Taxes are paid to local government. Harvesting is undertaken periodically. All lands are open for public hunting, fishing and trapping, and the Conservancy ups the ante a bit by making these lands open not just for these recreational uses but also for hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, biking, and more.

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:** LTC also made use of our properties for outdoor education. As of mid-December, some 5,030 children from 332 groups participated in our programs, including 4,535 students from 34 schools and others from scout groups, summer associations and homeschool groups. We partnered in conducting a Watershed Academy for high school students, worked with public library youth groups and others to help children learn about and enjoy the great outdoors.

**MEMBERSHIP & FINANCE:** 2015 was a record year for LTC with \$5,000 more contributed in membership donations than in any previous year. By December's end, 3,996 individuals, families, and businesses had donated \$855,675. Thank you!

**POPULARITY OF NATURE PRESERVES:** Meanwhile, the Conservancy continues to manage and care for the lands that have been entrusted to us in the past. This past year we added some new parking areas and expanded others, added winter grooming to a number of trails, and employed the use of trail cameras to count the numbers of users on our properties. We were gratified to see that improvements in our modest parking areas led to more than modest increases in preserve visitation—in fact, the numbers of people visiting the preserves increased as much as tenfold when improved access was provided. We saw similar increases in usage where winter grooming encouraged a greater variety of uses during the cold months. Using trail cameras to record all visits on some preserves and samples on others, we concluded that some 32,000 visits were paid to 34 of our most popular preserves in 2015.

**VOLUNTEERS:** Volunteers continue to play a prominent role in our work. Sixty-five school-aged volunteers helped with a variety of projects including monitoring kestrel nest boxes. Trail building was undertaken by the Lake Superior State University Fisheries and Wildlife Club, a floristic inventory of one of our preserves was completed by a botany class from the University of Michigan Biological Station, and a Harbor Springs Middle School class helped map a vernal pool on one of our preserves and plant native wildflowers and grasses on another. Several Eagle Scouts and scout groups completed volunteer projects as well.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) volunteers continue to help us with mailings and membership renewals in the office. Adding volunteer Preserve Stewards who help keep our trails open and watch over our preserves, a total of 352 volunteers donated 3,932 hours in service through mid-December.



Ellen Weatherbee recently donated a small coastal fen to LTC to become the Ellen Elliott Weatherbee Preserve. Located along M-134 just west of DeTour Village in Drummond Township, this high quality fen is habitat for at least 55 wetland plants including a state threatened sedge. During the spring and fall, a multitude of migratory birds use a sheltered pond region of the preserve. Separated by a small bit of land from Lake Michigan, the preserve forest is dominated by northern white cedar.

"I could not have been more pleased with the reception and continued enthusiasm of everyone with whom I have dealt at the Conservancy," Weatherbee said. "They have kept me up to date on all of the minute details that any property faces when it changes hands. I am absolutely delighted to have given the property its proper home with LTC."

## Weatherbee Fen

A LAKE HURON COASTAL FEN



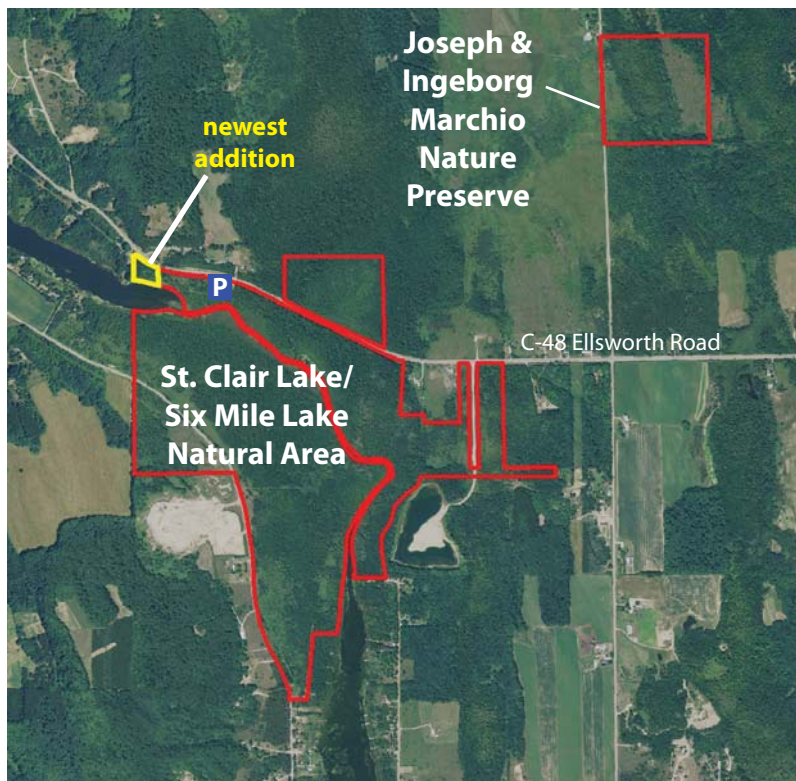
*Menyanthes trifoliata*  
Bogbean



*Sarracenia purpurea*  
Pitcher plant



*Andromeda glaucophylla*  
Bog rosemary



## St. Clair Lake/ Six Mile Lake Frontage Added

Over the years, the St. Clair Lake/Six Mile Lake Natural Area has grown to piece together a significant natural area protecting a large section of the upper Elk River Watershed Chain of Lakes. Early this year, another small addition to the preserve was purchased from JoAnne and Rick Beemon. JoAnne has long been a proponent for protecting this natural area that now includes 263 acres and roughly 2.4 miles of shoreline.

Straddling both Charlevoix and Antrim counties, the SCL/SML Natural Area is jointly owned by Little Traverse Conservancy and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC) and managed by GTRLC. A rustic boat launch off of C-48/Ellsworth Road provides an easy place to put in a canoe or kayak.



## VOLUNTEER PROFILE:

Darrell Lawson, Birder Extraordinaire



*"To me, volunteering with the LTC offers unique opportunities to enjoy the land that we all have been blessed with in northern Michigan and the Eastern Upper Peninsula. It is an opportunity to say thank you and support the conservancy that protects the land that I love so much. It also allows me to share and explore that land with others, while helping to ensure that future generations will have those same opportunities."*

- Darrell Lawson

As a preserve monitor, field trip leader, and photographer, Darrell has been a generous LTC volunteer. As president of Petoskey Audubon and with the spring migration around the corner, we asked Darrell to highlight some of his favorite birding apps.

1. For a field guide app, my preference is [Sibley Birds](#). It uses Sibley's excellent illustrations and contains detailed information on each species. My second choice would be the [iBird](#) app. I prefer the information in the Sibley's, but I like the user interface of iBird a little better and it contains both illustrations and photographs. The [Audubon Birds of North America](#) app is also popular among many birders, although I personally don't keep it on my phone, mostly because I prefer illustrations and this app only contains photographs. Keep in mind that each of these contains a large database of information, pictures, and sound recordings. They will take up a lot of space on your phone's storage.

2. While only available as an app on iPhone, [larkwire](#) is another app that I find useful. Thankfully, it is also available as a web application, so even though I have an Android phone, I can still use it (this way you can also use it on your computer without a smartphone or tablet). It is a great tool for learning bird vocalizations. It displays photos of birds while playing their vocalizations and includes quizzes to test you on similar sounding species. You can select beginner, intermediate, or advanced levels and work your way to becoming an expert! While nothing can replace actually being in the field for learning bird song, this is probably the next best thing.

3. The [BirdsEye](#) app uses the current location information from your phone to gather data from the eBird database. eBird is citizen science project developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that allows birders to enter their bird sightings into a global database. The BirdsEye app allows you to view recent, local bird sightings anywhere you have a data connection. If you're on vacation and looking for a hot birding spot, the BirdsEye app can help. Or if you're in a new area and know there is a species around that you'd like to see, the BirdsEye app can help you narrow down where to look.

And of course, we'll be covering these in a bit more detail at the upcoming Birding 101 event at the LTC Office on May 5 (see page 15).

## VOLUNTEER PROFILE: Ed and Diane Strzelinski



Ed and Diane Strzelinski are Kestrel Monitors and Preserve Stewards at the Darnton Preserve near Boyne City. In 2015, they had an active kestrel nest in their kestrel box. Diane reflects, *"our faithful mother kestrel sat on her 5 eggs in the Darnton nest box for 2 months and chicks remained inside the eggs"*. Unfortunately, these eggs never hatched. This information has been submitted to the American Kestrel Partnership as part of their nation-wide study of kestrel population decline. LTC currently has about 50 nest boxes installed on protected properties and as many volunteers bird watching and gathering data for the study.



"Fairyland at Waldron's Fen. Thanks for plowing the parking lot and grooming the trail." app user hwillens

"Rode Saturday 1/16/16 trail recently groomed, in great shape. Great spot for Fat Bikes." app user cjbenson516



## Love notes from the trails...

To Whom it May Concern,

I wanted to contact you guys and let you know what an amazing job you are doing with the grooming of the different nature preserves in the area. I started riding a fat bike 5 years ago and was one of the first people in the area to undertake this new sport. I have watched it grow from relative obscurity to a respected winter sport that is growing quite rapidly. When I first started this it was very difficult because of the lack of options for riding when there was any significant snowfall. The addition of the trail grooming this year at the preserves has made riding in the winter an absolute blast.

Almost every time I ride I run into other cyclists who are out there enjoying the trails. Some of these people I know and others are completely new to the sport. By grooming you have made it much more accessible and enjoyable for both experienced and novice riders. I truly believe that there has been a very respectful and cooperative relationship between the cyclists and the other winter trail users. Most of the time when I encounter XC skiers, snowshoers, or hikers they are actually curious about the fat bikes and are very welcoming of the sport.

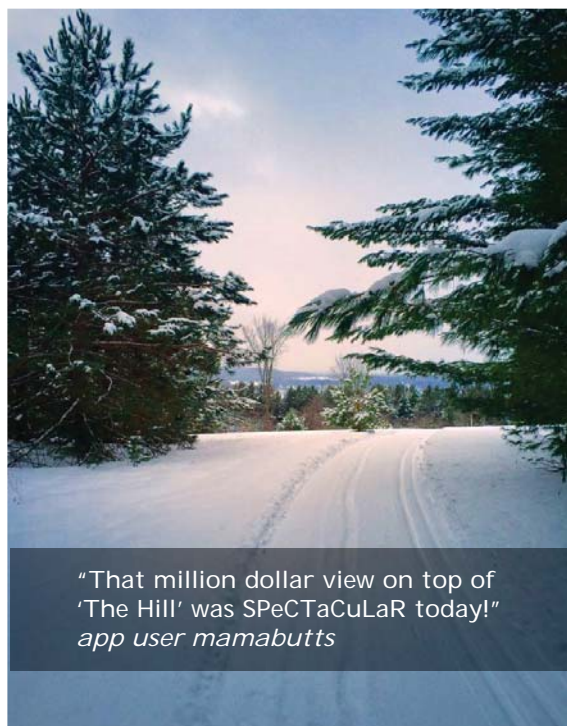
The groomer you guys are using works great. It is not so wide that it feels like you aren't on a trail. It is also not so narrow that you are hitting the edges of the trail. Also you guys have done a great job of your timing in grooming. You have been grooming when it's a little warmer before a cool down so that the snow sets up and stays very firm and it has made for great conditions. In short, thank you for all of the hard work! It has made my winter and many others' much more enjoyable. I hope that the grooming process will continue and even expand to other areas in the future.

Thanks again!!

Steve S.

Sarah, I just wanted to share how much I have enjoyed the 2 events I have participated in: the Andreae event and the Greenwood Foundation event. I am excited to have been made aware of the wonderful resources. My husband and I have a seasonal home in Cheboygan County and I usually go out on my own in the winter as he is an ice fisherman. It is fabulous to have some events near us in the winter.

- Eileen F.



"That million dollar view on top of 'The Hill' was SPeCTaCuLaR today!" app user mamabutts

After selling our cabin near Indian River a few years ago, we were unable to utilize the trails and natural areas you provide. We have since moved up to Petoskey full time and hike and snowshoe many of your wonderful preserves. What a wonderful place to live!

- Mark & Kathy



## Trekker's Travels

### TRAVELING FOX VISITS LTC NATURE PRESERVES



WHEN SUE IRISH STEWART DECIDES TO DO SOMETHING, she does it big. So when she came to us with the idea of visiting every single Little Traverse Conservancy preserve during the course of the year, we soon realized that an epic journey was about to unfold.

Now a couple months in, Sue, her father (and LTC co-founder) Dave Irish, and her brother-in-law John Texter have been enjoying their travels and are obtaining a crash course in Nature Preserves 101. Before journeying to each preserve, Sue takes a look at the preserve file to learn more of its history, how it was acquired, and what special features to notice. After their visit, she reports anything exciting, unusual or problematic that they have found. Coming from a background with the U.S. Forest Service and a lifelong inquiry about the natural world, her perceptions have been

rich, insightful, and full of healthy curiosity.

This journey, of course, isn't all about information gathering - it is a retirement project after all! It should be mentioned that one of Sue's goals is to sample a new - preferably local - cookie every time they set out on a preserve visit day. And in the theme of traveling gnomes or Barbie dolls, the preserve hopping gang has adopted a companion in Trekker the Fox (*seen above and bottom left.*)

"I grew up watching the Little Traverse Conservancy take shape, and moved home to find it a thriving non-profit engaged in land management and preservation," Sue wrote on her blog about their travels: [www.picnicthepreserves.org](http://www.picnicthepreserves.org). "Touring its 200 preserves gives me a perfect excuse for being outside. Besides, lunch tastes better outside - especially the cookies."

"The Sun will rise and set regardless. What we choose to do with the light while it's here is up to us. Journey wisely." - Alexandra Elle



Photos by Sue Irish Stewart

The Conservancy would like to thank the following new members and Friends or Benefactors who are new donors or increased their giving within that level from November 15, 2015 to February 24, 2016.

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# Upcoming Festivals & Events



LITTLE TRAVERSE CONSERVANCY'S

## EcoStewards Spring Kick Off!

**Saturday, April 23, 2016 11am-1pm**

*Carnegie Building, 461 E. Mitchell St., Petoskey*

### AGENDA

- **11:00am** LTC Presentation
- **11:30am** Guest Speaker David Mifsud
- **12:30pm** Light Lunch
- **1:30pm** Field Trip to Vernal Pool
- *Ongoing Project Sign up/Info Booths*

### Who are EcoStewards?

#### A Volunteer Program to Engage Field-Based Volunteers

Through LTC's EcoStewards Program, volunteer activities and projects are driven by you, the volunteer. We provide the framework, land, training, and learning opportunities. You explore, collect, research, restore, and share your results with us.



Guest speaker David Mifsud, aka Turtle Dave, will be the featured speaker at this year's kickoff.

Guest speaker David Mifsud is a certified professional wetland scientist, is also an authority in Michigan on conservation and management of amphibians and reptiles.

We invite you to join us after his presentation for a light lunch and a vernal pool field trip

**This event is FREE!**

**RSVP:**

*Call 231.347.0991  
or visit  
[www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org).*



*2nd Annual*

## Aldo Leopold Festival

*May 13-15, 2016*

Les Cheneaux Islands region

*Presenting the NEW*

North Huron Birding Trail *(see far right)*

### FEATURED ACTIVITIES:

- Guided birding and nature hikes at local preserves
- Aldo Leopold Triathlon (think kayaking!)
- Release of brand new *Beautiful Birds of Eastern Upper Peninsula* book
- Dark Sky Presentation
- Family friendly activities

For more info, visit [www.lescheneaux.net](http://www.lescheneaux.net).



Mackinac Straits Raptor Watch is holding their first annual Mackinaw Raptor Fest to celebrate hawks and owls migrating north! This event is for birders and nature enthusiasts and offers owl banding and star stories, informative and exciting presentations, a live raptor program and opportunities to observe raptors flying overhead. Both free and registration-only activities are offered. Visit [www.mackinaw-raptorfest.org](http://www.mackinaw-raptorfest.org) for more information and to register.

A live raptor program will also be presented by Wings of Wonder at Camp Daggett on Saturday, April 2, from 10:30-11:30 am. There is no fee and registration is not required. These events are made possible in large part through grants provided by the Petoskey-Harbor Springs Community Foundation and the Petoskey Area Visitors Bureau.



# BioBlitz

**2016 BioBlitz**

**Susan Creek Nature Preserve  
Friday and Saturday June 10 & 11**

Modeled after similar events held with the National Geographic Society and the National Park Service. 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. A \$2,000 grant from Great Lakes Energy will allow for the purchase of materials. 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. Check the web or call 231.347.0991 for more details.

**NORTH HURON  
BIRDING TRAIL**

HOME LOCATIONS BIRDING RESOURCES PLAN YOUR TRIP EVENTS CONTACT



Recognized as one of  
**"The Last Great Places"**  
in the Northern Hemisphere  
- The Nature Conservancy

Welcome to the North Huron Birding Trail



The north shoreline of Lake Huron in Michigan's Upper Peninsula has long been known as one of the most beautiful and pristine areas of wilderness in all of the Midwest. The Nature Conservancy has recognized this area of shoreline as one of "The Last Great Places" in the Northern Hemisphere, and for many years countless folks have escaped to this area to enjoy the bounty of natural wonders it has to provide. The rocky shorelines and protected bays in this area create excellent habitats for many species of sport fish, a multitude of rare orchids and ferns, and one of the Midwest's most diverse collection of bird species.

As a result of this research and recognition of Michigan's most Northern Lake Huron shoreline as a pristine gem, many local non-profits and government agencies have successfully protected large amounts of shoreline and surrounding areas through conservation easements and the creation of nature preserves. The passion of these organizations along with large amounts of publicly accessible land and the impressive diversity of bird species who utilize the area make it one of the most enjoyable birding trails in Michigan.

The North Huron Birding Trail can be thought of as 5 unique zones associated with nearby communities. Click on the links below to learn about each zone.

FEATURED Links



BirdTrax



bird  
art  
by  
Katie  
Eberts.

**Coming this Spring!**

Watch for the new North Huron Birding Trail to become live this spring. Visit [www.northhuronbirding.com](http://www.northhuronbirding.com).

## Spring Work Days

Join LTC staff as we improve trails at two beautiful Emmet County nature preserves. Call 231.347.0991 for more information and to let us know if you can come!

**Woollam Family Preserve Trail Building** (south of Cross Village)  
**Saturday April 9 10am - 4pm**

Join us in finishing the trail system at this beautiful preserve off of scenic M-119 as it meanders 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 for just a couple of hours. Call to let us know if you can make it.

**McCune Preserve Trail Improvements** (east of 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.

To find out about additional work days or other volunteer opportunities, call Volunteer Coordinator Cacia Lesh or visit [www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org) where you can sign up for our volunteer newsletter.

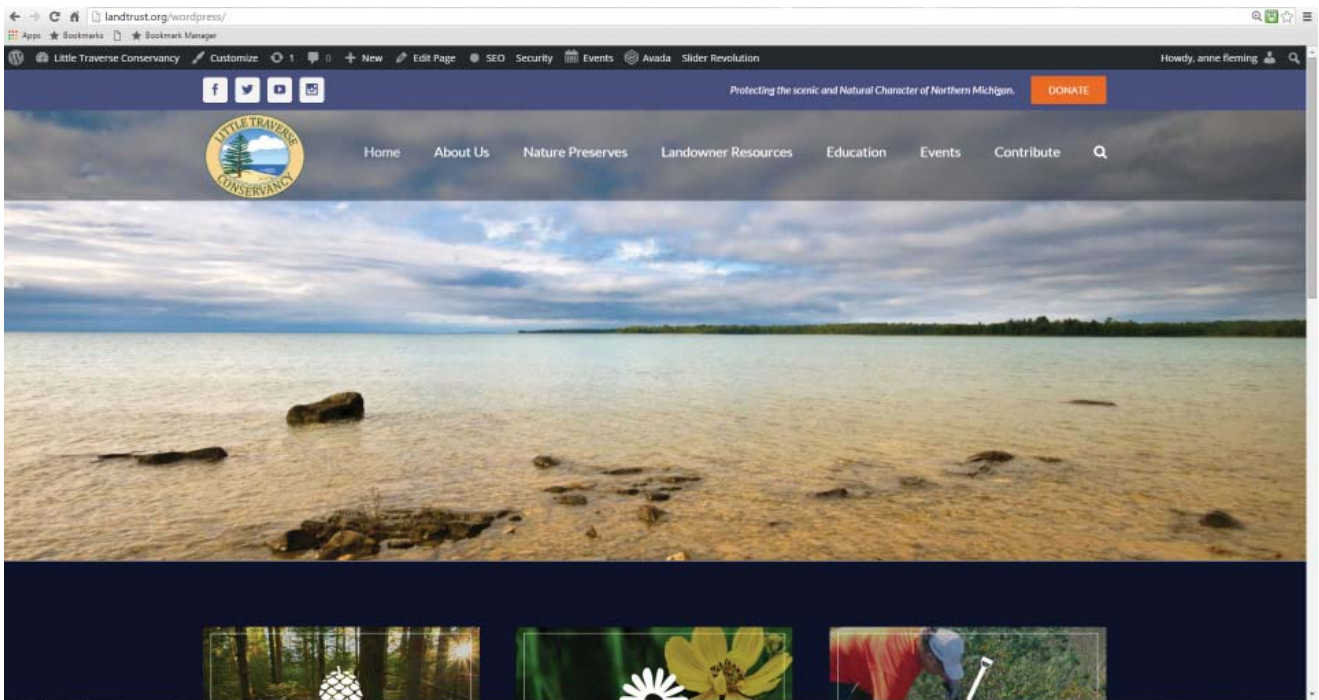




# in gratitude

- Grain Train for donating cookies and chili for our Andreae Preserve and McCune Preserve Open Houses. Thank you also to Doug Engler for clearing trails in preparation for the Andreae Open House, and Fred and Mary Clinton for clearing trails and helping at the McCune Open House.
- Holly Willcome and family for clearing snow from the McCune parking area for the Open House.
- Libby Ives for helping with data analysis and GIS mapping.
- Darrell Lawson for leading a birding field trip in the eastern UP and for donating the use of his photographs in our publications, and for helping at the McCune Open House.
- Greenwood Foundation for hosting a ski and snowshoe outing.
- Jim Haveman for discounted taxidermist services.
- Lynn Walters Frazee, Todd Parker, and Todd Petersen for donating the use of their photographs for LTC publications.
- Mary Trout for leading an after-school birding program series and assisting with Knee High programs.
- Ginny Cole for assisting education staff with updating the teacher contact database and program materials.
- Joe Clark of Glass Lakes Photography for discounted photography and video services.
- Parking area volunteer snow plowers: Tim DeWick, Birge Preserve; and Pat Bunker, Banwell Preserve.
- Volunteer Trail Groomers: John Griffin, Birge Preserve; Jeremy Davis and Brandy Todd, Derby Preserve; Dan Mann, Driggers Preserve; and Todd Wright, The Hill Preserve.
- John Griffin, Jim Keighly and Dan Reelitz for clearing trails at our UP Preserves after a heavy December storm.
- John Baker for donating his Tuesdays to doing many miscellaneous preserve maintenance tasks with us.
- Concord Academy of Boyne City Junior National Honor Society students for installing a kestrel nest box at the Darnton Preserve.
- Kelly Dumas and her daughter for installing a kestrel box at the Hymas Woods Preserve.
- Glen Matthews for reviewing forest management plans.
- Jan Jury for donating a nature book to our education program.
- Harbor Springs Excavating for sanding our driveway!

a new look for [www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org)  
*Let us know what you think. We continuously strive to make it better!*

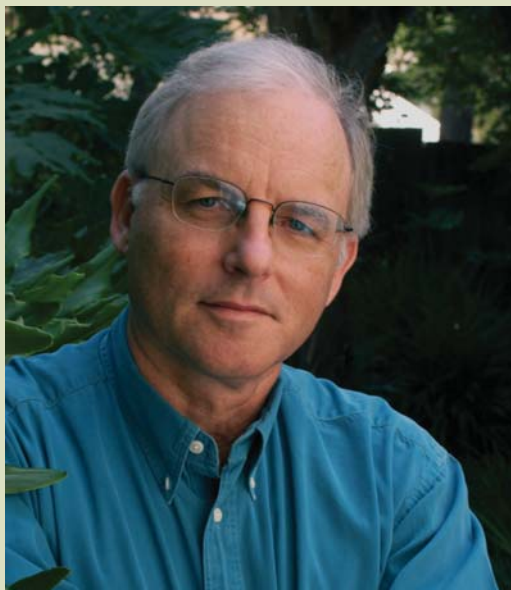




Nationally renowned speaker and author

## Richard Louv

coming to northern Michigan!



Author of "Last Child in the Woods," Louv coined the term "nature deficit disorder."

**May 4:** speaking in Elk Rapids

**May 5:** speaking in Traverse City

For details, visit [www.greenelkrapids.org](http://www.greenelkrapids.org).



photos by Joe Clark/www.glassimagesphoto.com

SNOWSHOE SEASON IS A WRAP! NEXT UP...

## SPRING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

PROGRAM REGISTRATION

BEGINS APRIL 12

WITH PROGRAMS RUNNING APRIL 26 — JUNE 3.

CALL 231.347.0991 TO SCHEDULE!

## NEW! Teen Outdoor Skills Series

In this new series, older kids can satisfy their appetites for adventure, learn a variety of outdoors skills and explore their creative side. Each day will feature a different theme designed to expose teens to various skills and activities that can be done outdoors for a lifetime.

**Program runs June 20 – 24, 2016**

**10:00am – 3:00pm**

Each session takes place at a Little Traverse Conservancy nature preserve. Participants will meet at the Conservancy office. Transportation will be provided to and from program site. For more information and to register call 231.347.0991. Space is limited. Preregistration required.

### Session One: Monday, June 20

Intro to Wilderness Survival Skills 1

*Fire making & compass skills*

### Session Two: Tuesday, June 21

Intro to Wilderness Survival Skills 2

*Shelter building & wild edibles/water collection*

### Session Three: Wednesday, June 22

Nature Photography

*Learn techniques for landscape & wildlife photography*

### Session Four: Thursday, June 23

Fly Fishing

*Learn the beautiful art of fly fishing*

### Session Five: Friday, June 24

Eco Journaling

*Sharpen observation skills & explore creative expression techniques*



## Memorial Gifts

### Ruth Anderson

Donald and Janeen Smith

### David A. Armour

Matthew and Anneke Myers

### Christopher Hyde Asbury

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Mr. and Mrs. Mark Gilbert

### Keith Bassett

Ms. Jean Bassett

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Mrs. Jean I. Everest  
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John and Barbara Varjabedian  
Volckens Research Group  
Ms. Wendy Young  
Mr. Todd Youngs

### Gerald Wendell

Mrs. Marian Wendell

### Tom White

Donald and Janeen Smith

## Honorariums

### Steve and Sally Huffman

Mr. and Mrs. W. Anthony Huffman

### Ric and Lisa Loyd

Mr. and Mrs. W. Anthony Huffman

### Ty Ratliff

Dean and Cheryl Dryer

### Happy Birthday

#### John Demmer 95th birthday

Lesley and Mary Fischer

### Sarah Gurney

William and Lucy Stubbings

### Beth Kost

Angie Ranalli  
Regina Wootton

### Happy Holidays Merry Christmas

#### Cindy Allen

Mr. Hal Gibson

### Anne Lenore Fitzgerald

Ms. Sarah Rose Fitzgerald

### Paul Nowak

Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Friendly

### John Richardson

Ms. Joan Richardson

### Lee Tegland

Jamie, Sarah and Joy MacLean

### Carole Vial

Paul and Claire Vial

### John, Janette and Jam Ward

Mrs. Beth Ranger



Jenuine Captures Photography





## A Meaningful Gift, A Mindful Investment

Earl Larson was one of the founding members of the Little Traverse Conservancy, and he has many fond memories of his role helping the organization form and get rolling forward nearly 44 years ago. In 1999 Earl and his wife Barbara retired from their work in Harbor Springs and moved to the tiny town of DeTour Village in the eastern Upper Peninsula. He and Barbara then focused on their philanthropic goals which included a scholarship fund to Lake Superior State University and a Charitable Remainder Annuity Trust to the Little Traverse Conservancy – the first such planned gift ever received by the Conservancy.

*"I believe that using the annuity as a form of gifting was a three-way 'win.' First, the yield is extremely good and gets better as you age. In my case the yield was superior to the stocks I was holding. The second 'win' is for your spouse: the annuity payments continue to them even after your death. The final 'win' is that you are giving funds to a terrific organization that is devoted to protecting the countryside you love – and ensuring that this countryside will be there to be loved and enjoyed by your children and grandchildren." Earl Larson*

## Is Planned Giving for You?

by Ty Ratliff, LTC's Director of Donor Relations

### *What are the benefits of giving while I'm alive?*

- Allows you to see the benefits of your gift.
- Allows you to personally be involved with the Conservancy, ensuring your gift is used as you see fit.
- Allows for an income tax deduction in the year the gift is given.

### *What are the benefits of giving after my death?*

- Provides clarity for surviving family members about your charitable intent.
- Supports the long-term sustainability of the Conservancy.
- May reduce estate taxes.

### *What is a life income gift?*

- A life income gift allows you to gift assets - including cash, securities or real estate - in exchange for a stream of income, with the remainder of the funds supporting the Conservancy.
- Examples of life income gifts are charitable gift annuities, pooled income funds and charitable remainder trusts.

### *What are the basic advantages of a charitable remainder trust (CRT)?*

- Diversification of your assets without incurring capital gains taxes
- Lifetime income
- Immediate income tax benefits
- Reduction of estate tax
- Meaningful support of the Conservancy



### *How do I add the Little Traverse Conservancy to my existing will or living trust?*

- Working with your estate planning attorney or financial advisor, you can simply add an amendment, called a codicil, to your will or living trust.
- Your bequest intentions are completely under your control during your lifetime.

### *What if I've already named the Little Traverse Conservancy as a beneficiary in my will?*

If you've already included the Conservancy in your estate plans, thank you very much — and please let Ty Ratliff, Director of Donor Relations, know.

Sharing your plans with the Conservancy helps us better assess our long-term financial picture and ensures our records reflect your intentions.  
tyratliff@landtrust.org or 231.344.1005.

Bequests are very flexible, and as with the Larson's Charitable Remainder Annuity Trust, come in several types and scenarios. There are many Planned Giving options that can deliver significant benefits to the Little Traverse Conservancy and provide tax benefits to the donor.

You can make a planned gift during your lifetime, or through your will and estate plan. Advanced and thoughtful planning offers you an opportunity to support the Little Traverse Conservancy knowing your gift will further the organization's mission for years to come.



## Reflections...Tom Bailey

Spring is on its way and before long our snow and ice will be melting, animals will awaken from their winter's sleep, and the flowers and leaves of spring will appear once again. Spring will sweep us up in its warmth, its life and its beauty. Spring is about life, growth, renewal, vitality and, more than any other season perhaps, spring epitomizes what land conservation is all about. Sure, land conservation involves economics, public policy, science, sustainability and a host of other concerns, but in the end what I think land conservation is really about is the natural joy we find in appreciating life, growth and beauty. Land conservation is really about love.

The Earth awakens in spring, and with it we awaken ourselves. We savor warm breezes, we wonder at the growth of new plants, we delight in seeing new life come forth as birds hatch their young and all manner of cubs, kits, fawns, calves, pups and other young come into this world to give it new life, new energy and new beauty.

We take photographs, we make videos, we make paintings, we savor the views. We write stories and essays, and we talk with one another about the wonders we see. There's a reason why we hang those photos and paintings on our walls and a reason why we read and tell those stories again and again: we want – and need – to remember our place in the natural world. The transformation that takes place in spring happens not only around us, but within us. When we hear the call of geese as they make their way northward, as they have since time immemorial, something deep inside us rejoices at the bursting forth of life that catches us up in the joy and wonder of spring.

We carry that joy into summer, when things ripen and mature; “the livin’ is easy,” and abundance blooms all around us. In autumn, we are captivated by the beauty of blazing color, the bounty of the harvest and the invigorating chill of the first frost. And in winter we rest, we stay close by the fire, we tell stories and count blessings as we await the growing light and blooming life of spring. What it's all about, in the end, is the love of life, the love of beauty, the love of the land, the love of one another and the love of our Mother Earth.

The constant bombardment we receive from mass media, social media, political media and what passes for “news” these days seldom mentions love, or beauty, or life. The beauty and wonder of Nature is reduced to “the environment.” Our

life-giving Mother Earth is referred to offhandedly as “the planet.” Our part in nature is denied, interpreted instead as a relationship “with” nature, as if there is something other than our own myopic vision that separates us. We see our relationships with our fellow beings and organisms reduced to quantities, equations, statistics and quotas, all things to be managed, and we hear about “environmental laws,” “food production” and the “climate change debate,” without terms like nourishment, gratitude, love, or setting a good example and leaving a healthy world for our grandchildren's grandchildren. Such notions, we're told, are “impractical,” or “fanciful,” or “romantic.” Land conservation is often treated as a luxury, not a necessity.

How sad. “Romantic” notions and the love of beauty are what make us human, what give us the ability to appreciate the life around us and what make us living, feeling beings. To appreciate the beauty and harmony of the natural world is to embrace and appreciate life itself. In response to the scientific quest to smash atoms, bombard particles and otherwise search - and - destroy in an effort to break things down to their “basic building blocks,” I would remind the searchers that we're always brought back to the conclusion that there are two things in the Universe: energy and relationships, and that the most wondrous relationship we can have with the world around us, as well as with one another, is love. Science arose from this, not the other way around.

Maybe that doesn't resonate with the enviro-scientific orthodoxy about taking “objective” measurements and coming to “logical” conclusions, but what else can one say to those who have locked their hearts away in a safe deposit box in order to pretend to be objective?

Spring is one of the best times to throw off the chains of conventional thought, to cast off the bonds of economic, scientific and political orthodoxy and simply enjoy our innate love of the natural world. Call it “Biophelia,” as Professors E.O. Wilson and Stephen Kellert did in their science-oriented work, or let your heart hear the call of poets and artists who summon us to open the window or better yet go outdoors and savor the beauty of spring.

Go for a walk. Look, listen, smell, taste, and savor. Feel without thinking for a change and you'll be rewarded with the satisfaction that comes with connecting to that which is already deep inside us; to that which we were made to feel, made to enjoy and made to express. The land can help us back to who we are. Spring can re-connect us with what matters: with beauty, with life, and with love.



Morgan Scott



# Spring 2016

## COMMUNITY FIELD TRIPS

Pre-registration is required by calling 231.347.0991  
or online at [www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org)

### Kestrel Nest Box Program Gathering

**Saturday, March 26 10am - noon LTC Office**

Join Kestrel Program volunteers for a spring gathering and season kick off at the LTC office. This informal gathering will be a chance to meet volunteer nest box monitors, ask questions about the monitoring program, visit a kestrel box, sign up to monitor a box, and learn more about volunteering with LTC.

### Maple River Ramble

**Saturday, April 16 10am - noon**

**Philip C. Braun Nature Preserve, Pellston**

To date, LTC has protected 1.5 miles of the Maple River, Emmet County's premier trout stream and an important tributary of the Cheboygan River Watershed. Former staffer, trout stream enthusiast, and all-around "ramble-rouser" Doug Fuller will lead an exploration along the banks and bluffs of the West Branch of the Maple throughout the 127-acre Braun Preserve. Be prepared for some bush whacking.

**EcoStewards Volunteer Kick Off - April 23** (see p. 8)

### Birding 101: How to Become a Birder

**Thursday, May 5 5:30-7:30pm**

**LTC Office/Spring Lake Park**

Have you wanted to learn how to become a "birder" but have never really known where to start? This is your chance to learn some birding ID skills in the classroom, and then head out to the field to put your new skills to use. Petoskey Regional Audubon Society (PRAS) President Darrell Lawson will lead a birding class at the LTC office, and then the group will head to Spring Lake Park to listen and look for migrating and resident birds. We will cover field guide choice/use, optics selection/use, tips for learning bird vocalizations, and identification pitfalls to avoid. Bring your own binoculars if you have them. Please call LTC or register at [www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org). Limited to 20 participants.

### Mother's Day Spring Wildflower Walk

**Goodhart Farms Preserve**

**Sunday, May 8 1-3pm**

Celebrate Mother's Day with a hike through hardwood forests in search of wildflowers. LTC conservation easement specialist Derek Shiels shares his wealth of plant knowledge and will guide us through the wonders of northern Michigan's spring ephemeral wildflowers. Families welcome. Meet at the parking area on Church Road. Registration appreciated.

**Aldo Leopold Festival in Les Cheneaux May 13-15** (see p. 8)

### Birding the Rogers Family Homestead Preserve

**Thursday, May 19 5:30-7:30pm**

Join LTC and PRAS for an evening of birding near East Jordan.

The Rogers Family Homestead Preserve, along the Jordan River, offers a strong mixture of habitat that is sought after by both migrating and breeding birds. PRAS President Darrell Lawson will be on hand to identify the birds that we see and hear and to answer any questions that may come up. Meet at the parking area on the south end of the preserve off of Rogers Road. Plan for a gentle, slow paced hike for approximately two hours. For those who wish, we will plan on dinner at a restaurant in East Jordan afterwards. Loaner binoculars will be available. Please call LTC or register at [www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org). Limited to 20 participants.

### Birding at the Waldron Fen

**Saturday, May 21 8-10:30am**

Join LTC and PRAS on a birding field trip at the Waldron Fen Nature Preserve near Alanson. The preserve offers a delightful mixture of habitats, which allows it to support a wide diversity of bird species. This will be the peak of songbird migration through northern Michigan so expect to see a wide array of species during this walk. Plan to spend approximately two hours hiking the trails while learning to identify birds by sight and sound. PRAS President Darrell Lawson will lead the trip and help to both locate birds and explain their behavior. Loaner binoculars will be made available. Please call LTC or register at [www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org). Limited to 20 participants.

### Warblers on the Water Birding Festival May 27-29

[www.beaverislandbirdingtrail.org](http://www.beaverislandbirdingtrail.org) - Will include LTC preserves.

### Ransom Preserve Birding

**Saturday, June 4 8-10am**

Join LTC and PRAS on a birding field trip at the 80-acre Charles A. Ransom Nature Preserve near Charlevoix. This hilltop preserve with splendid views offers a delightful mixture of habitats, which allows it to support a wide diversity of bird species. Scarlet Tanagers and Indigo Buntings have been regular in the past. Great-crested Flycatcher nested at this location in recent years. Rose-breasted grosbeak, various woodpeckers, various sparrows and even some warblers are all possibilities. Plan to spend approximately an hour and a half watching birds in the canopy from near the parking area. PRAS President Darrell Lawson will be on hand to help identify birds and answer your questions about them. For those who wish to hike down the hill and back, Darrell will take you down to show you the Kestrel nest box and explain the Kestrel nest box program that the LTC is operating in conjunction with the Peregrine Fund. Once done at Ransom, we will caravan to a field a few miles away where we will observe Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks, and possibly even Upland Sandpipers. Please call LTC or register at [www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org). Limited to 20 participants.

**BioBlitz Friday and Saturday June 10 & 11** (see p. 9)



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*Scan the codes below for LTC's  
smart phone nature preserve  
app, available at no charge.  
The app includes info about  
LTC trails as well as other  
area trails such as the  
North Country Trail.*



iPhone



Android

Little Traverse Conservancy, Inc.  
3264 Powell Road  
Harbor Springs, MI 49740-9469  
231.347.0991  
[www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org)

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## FROM OUR VOLUNTEERS



*We have been closely working with  
the Conservancy for the past year  
to produce much needed media  
for them to promote their educational  
programs. In the coming months  
stay tuned for one of our first video  
productions featuring this great  
organization.*

**- Joe Clark**

**Glass Lakes Photography**

*a downtown Petoskey gallery  
[www.glasslakesphotography.com](http://www.glasslakesphotography.com)  
(photo and video volunteer)*



*"I have loved the skiing so far, even if the snow isn't always optimal for grooming, it has been so  
refreshing! **Mary Johnson** shown left with Hill's Angels (trail volunteers at The Hill Preserve)*