



CONSERVATION EASEMENT

Landowner Newsletter

Spring 2022

PHOTO BY THE WANDERING FAWN PHOTOGRAPHY

50 Years of Land Protection

Little Traverse Conservancy is celebrating 50 years this year! It all began when a group of seven northern Michigan residents decided to establish an organization in 1972 that would protect the natural integrity and scenic beauty of northern Michigan. One year later, the first land project, the A.C. Fischer Nature Preserve, was established in Emmet County. Since then, we've acquired over 300 nature preserves and working forest reserves covering over 24,000 acres, protecting natural spaces for myriad flora and fauna to survive and thrive. LTC's work ensures that a portion of northern Michigan's forests, meadows, wetlands, shorelines, and landscapes remain undeveloped for the benefit of wildlife and people, now and for future generations. Nature preserves and reserves are open to the public for a variety of outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, birdwatching, fishing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Over 100 miles of trails facilitate recreational use and some preserves are open to biking, hunting, and horseback riding.

Conservation easements were added as a land protection tool in 1986 with

the first easement donated in 1987. The conservation easement provided another tool for protecting land in northern Michigan and LTC adopted this capability after the IRS rule allowing tax deductions for qualifying easements was established in 1986.

This unique tool provided the opportunity to protect land that remains in private ownership. In 1987, the first conservation easement was donated to LTC by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Horner. Thirty-five years later, we've acquired 318 conservation easements totaling 27,508 acres. While most conservation easements have been donated, some have been purchased through special programs. The Conservancy recently revived our Conservation Investment Program (CIP), which entails purchasing a property, placing a conservation easement on it, and re-selling it to a conservation-minded buyer. Because conservation easement properties are not open to the public, they are not as well-known as our preserves and reserves. Yet they remain a vital component of our land protection efforts.

Another way LTC has helped protect land in northern Michigan is by assisting state

and local governments acquire natural and park lands, such as Sturgeon Bay Dunes in Emmet County, North Point in Charlevoix County and Hessel Beach in Mackinac County. The Conservancy has helped protect an additional 18,256 acres through 88 projects in this way.

To facilitate appreciation for our natural surroundings, offer outdoor recreational opportunities, and inform community members about the importance of protecting land, LTC began an Environmental Education program in 1984 that has evolved and grown substantially over the years. Our education programs involve community field trips, presentations, and our popular free school programs reaching thousands of students annually throughout our service area.

These accomplishments were possible through the years and now because of an amazing network of dedicated people who embody Little Traverse Conservancy and support its unwavering mission. We're excited to continue on this journey to protect the land that we all love for the next 50 years and beyond.

Falco sparverius Needs Help!

Known for its buoyant and speedy flight, the American Kestrel hunts above fields in search of daily meals – insects, small mammals, reptiles, or amphibians. The most colorful and smallest of falcons living in the U.S., this bird of prey's population has been declining in the last several decades. In order to find out why and to assist with nesting opportunities, the American Kestrel Partnership, created by the Peregrine Fund, has developed a research program, involving citizen scientists, to help collect data by monitoring kestrel nest boxes. Little Traverse Conservancy has been participating in this program for several years, and there are nest boxes on over 35 LTC nature preserves. In addition, 18 conservation easement property owners that have a total of 25 nest boxes installed on their properties. Last year, 9 of those boxes on easements were reported active.

If this project interests you, there are various ways to become involved and give kestrels a helping hand:

- As an easement owner, you can install a kestrel box on your property to monitor, if you have suitable habitat. Kestrels prefer open areas with available perches, such as meadows/grasslands or shrub lands with snags, fence posts, lone trees, or power lines. We have kestrel boxes built by volunteers available to you at no charge, or you can make or purchase your own.

- If you would like to have one on your property, but are not able to monitor it, it may be possible to find a volunteer to help with that.
- If your property doesn't meet the criteria for kestrel habitat, but you would still like to be involved, you can become a volunteer kestrel box monitor on an LTC preserve.

What is involved? Installing a box, cleaning the box and replacing the bedding annually, observing the box periodically throughout the nesting season (spring through summer), and sharing your observations on the American Kestrel Partnership website. LTC provides instruction and serves as a resource.

This is a great opportunity to be part of a solution to help kestrels thrive. It's also a wonderful activity to do with children or grandchildren!

For more details about the program and commitment required, please contact LTC Volunteer Coordinator Cacia Lesh at 231.344.1002 or cacia@landtrust.org. More information can also be found at kestrel.peregrinefund.org.



PHOTO BY DOUG GREENBERG

At about 9 inches long, Kestrels are approximately the size of a Jay. They have slender, pointed wings, that span about 22 inches when fully open and they have a long tail, common to falcons. Males have slate-blue wings; females' wings are reddish brown. Kestrels are known to bob their tail up and down while perched.



Kestrels prefer to nest in cavities, but do not construct their own. They seek out a variety of already-made openings, such as old woodpecker holes or crevices in barns, thus the attraction to human-built nesting boxes. It is important to follow specific instructions for box placement, including location, surroundings, height off the ground, etc., to help promote nesting use and success.

2022 Easement Owner Updates

MONITORING SCHEDULE 2022

This year's monitoring window is April 12 - November 11. We're happy to have you join us during monitoring! If you would like to schedule a site visit, please contact Melissa at 231.344.1004 or email melissa@landtrust.org.

CURRENT CONDITIONS REPORTS

Baseline documentation reports provide detailed information of the physical conditions and uses of a property at the time of an easement donation. It remains a critical document for each easement in perpetuity, but as time passes and changes occur, the original baseline may not reflect those changes.

To bring these baselines up to date, Little Traverse Conservancy plans to prepare Current Condition Reports for properties on which we hold a conservation easement. This report will include current photos of boundaries and specific features from locations consistent with the original baseline photo locations. It will also include photographs of any recently permitted structures, permitted activities, or changes created by natural causes.

We will be starting with a few per year and focusing on properties that have older conservation easements or have had changes to the property. This report will be done during the annual monitoring visit. Taking photos is a common practice while monitoring, but the documentation update process may take longer than usual. As always, you are welcome to accompany staff during the monitoring visit.

Little Traverse Conservancy will notify conservation easement landowners whose property will be getting a Current Conditions Report and a copy of the completed report will be sent to them for review and verification.

Current Conditions Reports are an important tool to aid in the long-term monitoring and documentation of conservation easement properties to ensure the continued protection of the conservation values LTC is obligated to uphold.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT SIGNS

Up to two signs are available for you at no charge, with additional signs available at \$7.50 each. Landowners have posted them at driveway entrances, gates, trailheads at boundaries, or other visible locations. Signs denote private conservation property. Call our office at 231.347.0991.

Current Easements by County

County	Acres	# of Easements
Charlevoix	4,223	82
Cheboygan	10,003	67
Chippewa	4,558	22
Emmet	7,735	129
Mackinac	990	18
TOTAL	27,508	318

PLEASE CONTACT US IF...

- There is a change in ownership of your conservation easement property.
- You plan on exercising reserved rights, particularly those requiring pre-approval or notification.
- You have any questions.

A phone call or email doesn't take long, but helps ensure that you and the Conservancy, have the same understanding about upcoming changes to your easement property and helps prevent misunderstandings and unnecessary problems.



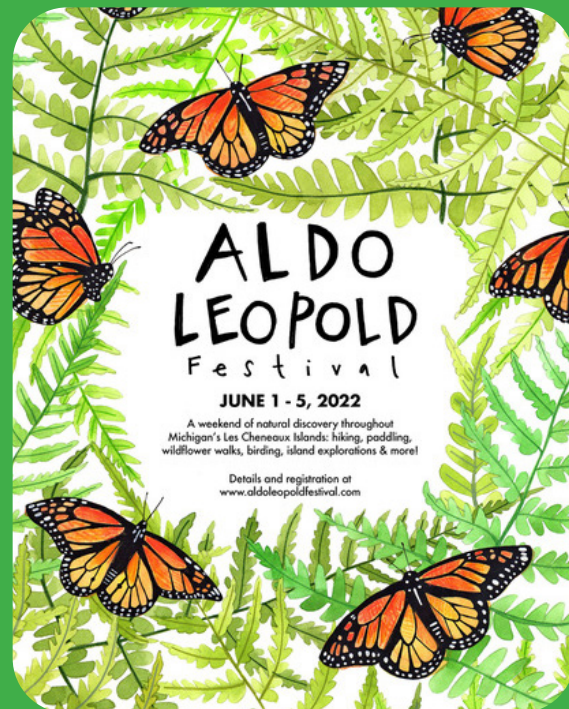
For any easement related updates or questions, please contact Melissa Hansen, Director of Conservation Easements, at 231.344.1004 or email melissa@landtrust.org.

The Legacy of Protecting the North Country We All Love



The mission of the Little Traverse Conservancy is to protect the natural diversity and beauty of northern Michigan by preserving significant land and scenic areas, and fostering appreciation and understanding of the environment. If LTC's work resonates with you, consider a planned gift. Advanced and thoughtful planning offers you the opportunity to support LTC knowing your legacy gift will further our mission for years to come. Most importantly, a planned gift can be a powerful expression of your desire to make a difference – and leave a lasting legacy.

There are many ways to leave a legacy gift to LTC. For more information about planned giving, please contact Associate Director Ty Ratliff at 231.344.1005 or tyratliff@landtrust.org



Upcoming Conservation Events

Aldo Leopold Festival - A weekend of natural discovery throughout Michigan's Les Cheneaux Islands. Wildflower walks, paddles, birding, and more! Visit www.aldoleopoldfestival.org.

LTC Community Field Trips - LTC offers year-round community field trips at no charge. Visit landtrust.org/events-archive.



INCREASE YOUR IMPACT

As a conservation easement property owner, you are already a partner in protecting our beautiful northern Michigan area. If you are currently an LTC member, we THANK YOU for your support! Not yet a member? Then...

You're invited!

to What? Increase your conservation impact in northern Michigan

When? Today!

Why? To help keep northern Michigan the special place it is.

How? By joining over 4,000 LTC members who are an integral part of the work we do. Visit landtrust.org/membership or call our office at 231.347.0991.

Membership includes a copy of the Featured Nature Preserve Guide, free summer programs, first notification of field trips, free access to Thorne Swift Nature Center, quarterly newsletters, LTC's annual report, and the good feeling that your contribution has a lasting effect on our community and future generations.

PROTECTING THE NORTH COUNTRY WE ALL LOVE