

Landscapes



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More Than “Just” A Natural Beauty Road

Boudeman Has Now Protected 991 Acres

Shirwood “Woody” Boudeman wants to make sure that BC Avenue in Kalamazoo County — a Natural Beauty Road — will remain naturally beautiful forever. So this past December, Woody and his family donated two conservation easements to SWMLC along the south side of BC Avenue. These two new easements, along with 478 acres on the north side of BC Avenue that already have easements, protect an astonishing 632 acres, almost a full square mile of land on the west side of Gull Lake.

BC Avenue is one of three state-designated Natural Beauty Roads in Kalamazoo County that protect the rural character and beauty along the roads. This designation prohibits extensive vegetation management on the roadside but does not prohibit development and other activities that could impact the road’s scenic quality. Protecting both sides of BC Avenue with conservation easements creates a higher level of protection, restricting residential development and ensuring that the scenic beauty of this entryway to the Gull Lake area will remain undeveloped forever.

But Woody recognized that there were other conservation benefits when he started



The scenic view of BC Avenue is forever protected. Photo by Nate Fuller.

protecting his land with SWMLC. He was concerned about the disappearance of farmland in the area, the quality of water that flows into Gull Lake, and the loss of wildlife habitat and rural character.

The Boudeman conservation easements just west of Gull Lake guarantee that the prime farmland on the edge of the ever-expanding Village of Richland will always be available for agricultural use. In addition,

the lake frontage and wetlands along Grassy Lake and Miller Lake will remain undeveloped, and the soil will not be altered and will continue to provide groundwater recharge that is critical for protecting the water supply into Gull Lake.

“The members of the Boudeman family are people of exceptional character, concerned about the preservation of the natural

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Natural Beauty Road (continued)

beauty of the Gull Lake area,” states Brian Winne, president of the Gull Lake Quality Organization, the citizens’-based group concerned with protecting water quality in the watershed. “Their conservation work will provide for a better quality of life for residents for generations to come. We are all blessed by their generosity.”

A founding board member of the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, Woody demonstrated his commitment to conservation and leadership by enlisting fellow conservationists to the cause and promoting the merits of working with a land conservancy to protect land for future generations. During the decade that followed his early involvement with SWMLC, Woody promoted collaboration between SWMLC and other conservation organizations, such as Ducks Unlimited, the Gull Lake Quality Organization, and MSU’s Kellogg Biological Station.

In 2004, Woody decided it was time to begin a new phase in his conservation work by protecting his family’s land. Since then, SWMLC has worked with Woody and family members to place conservation easements on 991 acres in the greater Gull Lake area. This is 12% of the total land SWMLC has protected to date. Our Prairieville Creek watershed project in Barry County is in large part driven by Woody’s willingness to donate a conservation easement on 60 acres that he owns with his sister, Martha Vander Molen, between M-43 and Mud Lake.

“Mr. Boudeman’s impact on SWMLC’s conservation work cannot be measured solely by the number of acres he has protected,” said Peter Ter Louw, executive director. “He is a conservation



Above: The Boudeman Family Conservation Easements are highlighted.

Below: View of the BC Avenue Conservation Easement looking southwest over the soybean fields. Map and photo by Emily E. Wilke.

leader and a partner in our work, and we often seek his guidance and counsel on implementing our vision. SWMLC is lucky to have someone on our team who is so passionate about preserving the scenic, natural, and agricultural character of this region.”

— Emily E. Wilke



Sherwood “Woody” Boudeman: Conservationist Extraordinaire

A conservationist is one who is humbly aware . . . he is writing his signature on the face of the land. Aldo Leopold

“I’m a conservationist, not a preservationist,” says the man whose efforts account for protection of almost 1,000 acres, which include valuable farm land in Kalamazoo County’s Gull Lake and Gull Prairie area, the kind of land so difficult to protect because of the absence of funding for farmland preservation programs. Sherwood “Woody” Boudeman’s commitment is the result of seven decades of love for the land. The seeds were planted in the good ground of his youth.

As a founder of SWMLC, the Gull Lake resident warms to his subject. “Nature became a part of me at an early age. My parents took us to the National Parks when we were growing up, but I would say my respect for the land came from my father and through a lifetime of hunting and fishing. Hunters are the best stewards of the land.”

An active outdoorsman, Woody has lived a life of adventure spanning three continents. After graduation from Drake University where he lettered in tennis and later received the coveted “Double D” award for Distinguished Service, Woody added an MBA. He spent six months as a “buck sergeant,” a federalized National Guardsman in troubled Detroit during the 1967 riots, beginning a successful business career with 20 years as the Agricultural Administrative Services Director with The Upjohn Company, service as a director of Comerica Bank, and founder and owner of Arcadia Investment Bank. His extensive community involvement and contributions include trustee and director of Bronson Hospital, the YMCA, and a host of other local and

national outdoor and environmental groups.

Woody has been sailor as well as soldier, winning sailing trophies and competing in the International Star Class Yacht Racing championships. Cross-country skier, swimmer, runner, mountain biker, last spring found him crossing the finish line first in his age group in the Sherman Lake YMCA “Shermanator” triathlon. But with all of his interests and activities, Woody never lost his sight of his first love and commitment to the land. His efforts at land preservation began modestly in 1965 with purchase of the Nichols farm near Gull Lake. In a day when there is inexorable pressure to carve up the landscape, this modest, intrepid individual bucked the trend by reassembling large tracts of land, proving it is not impossible to “put Humpty-Dumpty back together again.” As he assembled acreage, he educated himself, participated in various conservation programs, became an innovator, experimented with various plantings of native prairie and oak savanna, cultivated a half-century old walnut grove, and had his property federally designated as a Monarch Butterfly Waystation. He recruited technical support, hired a land manager, established good relationships with area farmers dependent upon leasing prime agricultural lands, and implemented “best practices” as part of agricultural leases, leaving

harvest residues until spring so hundreds of Sandhill cranes can use fields during annual migrations.

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin. One must labor for beauty as for bread. John Muir

Woody and his wife Sharon are generous in sharing the bounty and beauty of the land with four children and seven grandchildren so three generations enjoy the wonders of the natural world. Birding groups are welcomed. The Plein Air Artists of West Michigan have painted the seasons’ moods. By opening the land to the Kellogg Biological Station, students’ minds were opened to studies and research. As he drew nigh to beauty, beauty drew even closer to Woody until one day he discovered he owned both sides of a “Natural Beauty Road.” Because beauty must be shared and protected, Woody began to place conservation easements on one property after another until the acreage protected

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The entire Boudeman family was there for the sign dedication. Front row: Sharon Boudeman, Carol Lynn Boudeman. Back row: Woody Boudeman, Erin Tilbury, SWMLC executive director Peter Ter Louw, Kappy Boudeman, and Sherwood Boudeman. Photo by Alfred J. Gemrich.

exceeded that of any other landowner. The area grew like faith the size of the grain of mustard seed until it “waxed a great tree” — the Michigan State Champion Osage Orange tree.

I believe in the forest, and in the meadow and in the night in which the corn grows. Henry David Thoreau

It is unclear which came first, the transformation of land or of character of the man, but in the process, Woody became an ambassador, a super salesman, a Pied Piper for land conservation, reaching out to others, inviting their involvement. His advice for the younger generation reflects his nautical background: “Get outdoors. Keep your head out of the cockpit. Don’t just look at the compass. Look at the wind and waves. Educate yourselves about the natural world. Don’t wait to do something to make a better world.” He has lived these words. He is an artist of the future creating a unique legacy. With the customary smile and twinkle in his eye, he adds, “I’d like to be here in 50 years to see how things have turned out.”

It takes people like Woody Boudeman to put into action their ideas, who encourage others by radiating a courage and vision which is often the product of an inner sense that is not

easily communicated in words. Woody, like others drawn to the wisdom of the natural world, knows intuitively its value, which finds voice in the words of the poet Wendell Berry when he says:

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I awake at night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with the forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

SWMLC is fortunate to have among its founders, members and friends, Woody Boudeman. Because of his efforts, future generations can “rest in the grace of the world and be free.”

— Alfred J. Gemrich

Wallace-Hinchman Centennial Farm Protected Forever

The Wallace family has loved their farm for over 100 years. Now 133 acres of the farm, which borders Calhoun and Barry counties, are protected by a conservation easement. Even if the farm someday leaves the family, they know that it will be kept as they left it. With frontage on Baseline Road, Hutchinson Road, and Waubasca Lake, the property would be prime for residential development without the easement protecting it.

The land was first purchased by Thomas Hinchman on October 2, 1850, and has been passed down from generation



Photo of Mike and Elaine Wallace by Mariya Wallace.

to generation. Mike Wallace, the fifth generation resident of the property, adamantly

stated that, “With all the development in the area, I wanted my land preserved, not turned into a subdivision like the land across the lake.”

The farm is comprised primarily of productive prime agricultural soils. Protecting this land will ensure that it will be preserved for farming for generations to come. Along with the agricultural land, the easement also protects almost 50 acres of rolling oak-hickory forest and forested and emergent wetlands.

Protecting the wetlands and frontage along Waubasca Creek and Lake protects the water quality of these water bodies and the Kalamazoo River downstream.

This farm property adds to the land already protected by Kim and Lula Palmer in 2008. The Palmer Conservation Easement conserves 48 acres of wet-



One of many scenic views of the Wallace property. Photo by Emily E. Wilke.

lands and forests along Waubasca Lake just to the east of the Wallace Farm. Both of these properties ensure a natural shoreline for the lake that is beneficial not only for the scenic views but for the wildlife, including the well-known population of blue gills that the ice fisherman enjoyed this winter.

— Emily E. Wilke

Something for Everybody — KEKA Preserve

“We only had to walk the property once and we knew: this place just has to be kept for wildlife. The creek, the ponds, the woods . . . it has something for everybody. Well, at least for animals,” said Lois Richmond as she reminisced about when she and her husband, Jim, bought the land that is now one of SWMLC’s newest preserves.

Jim and Lois Richmond’s appreciation of the nature surrounding the Comstock Creek area began in 1985 when they purchased their home on Lyon’s Lake. Shortly after moving in, a neighbor alerted them that a nearby parcel was up for sale that they might want to check out. They moved on the opportunity quickly. Less than a month after moving to their new home, Jim and Lois had already started protecting natural areas in their community.

The property’s name, KEKA, comes from the initials of the Richmond’s children: Kevin, Emilie, Kurtis, and Andrew. All of the children, some with children of their own, enjoyed exploring the woods, ponds, and wetlands on the property. For a brief time, one of the children and his family even lived on KEKA, staying in the small refurbished home that came with the property.

When Jim and Lois purchased the land in 1985, a small house still stood in the middle of the property. It was built by the previous landowner, Melvin Shearer, using his own sawmill and timber harvested from the adjacent woods. Jim still has parts of that old sawmill in his barn today. Even after the house was razed, they left the old chimney standing to be used as an outdoor fireplace next to a utility shed hand-made by Jim (both are pictured in photo above).

Jim built the shed to provide shelter for the stream of visitors and volunteers they welcomed to KEKA. Members of the Audubon Society of Kalamazoo regularly lead walks at KEKA and have kept records of species for years. Wild Ones native landscapers started wildflower plantings in the

space left by the old home site. Particular care was given to a garden site lovingly tended by Tom and Nancy Small.

Lois fondly remembers Nancy picking out specific spots for each of the new additions they would bring out.

“They were like her children.

She knew each of them intimately — how tall they would grow, how much sun they liked, how they would get along with the plants next to them.” The garden and plantings at KEKA will remain a lasting legacy to Nancy’s love of the natural world.

With help from their friends and neighbors, Jim and Lois have led efforts to steward the land. From planting pockets of prairie to building basking platforms for turtles, there is a legacy of stewardship at this preserve. Extensive plant and animal lists were built after many visits of bird-watchers from Audubon Society of Kalamazoo, botanists from Wild Ones, and countless naturalists that were guests of the Richmonds.

KEKA provides a diversity of habitat for flora and fauna alike. Less than a mile east of Lyon’s Lake and SWMLC’s Marc’s Marsh preserve, Comstock Creek flows through KEKA Preserve, joining the outflow from the lake before continuing south. The preserve also protects the western shore of Mud Lake, an undeveloped five-acre lake tucked back into the woods and wetlands of the Comstock Creek corridor.

Open areas along the creek provide wildflower displays throughout the growing season with blue flag irises in the spring,



*Many have learned more about the natural world at KEKA.
Photo by James Richmond.*

purple-fringed orchids in the summer, and beautiful gentians in the fall. An oak-hardwoods forest slopes up to the north from the wetlands of Comstock Creek. Groves of mature oaks stand tall over the woodland, providing homes for owls, woodpeckers, and wood ducks. Every spring and fall, migratory birds flock to KEKA to find food and shelter.

Turtles, snakes, and frogs of almost every kind can be found at KEKA. Lois was excited to find a great big spiny softshell turtle laying eggs by the side of the trail last summer, a striking difference in shape and function than the Eastern box turtles, which are often found in the nearby woods. Even during the quieter winter months, ever-flowing springs in the ponds often keep the water open, and KEKA is a good place to look for fox, deer, muskrat, beaver, and others animals making use of the open water.

KEKA truly does have “something for everybody, at least for animals,” and probably for most nature lovers as well. SWMLC is excited to add KEKA to its portfolio of nature preserves and looks forward to continuing the legacy of stewardship inspired by the Richmonds.

— Nate Fuller

Sustainable Decree

Strehlow-Oberheu CE protects wildlife resources and reserves right to utilize alternative energy technologies on-site

Walt and Laura know their natural space intimately, encouraging new native arrivals while savoring resident stalwarts. Thorough, holistic planning on the part of these landowners set the stage for multifaceted resource protection directed in written word through a conservation easement. Their approach will enable them to forever protect a wide array of indigenous plants and native habitat for wildlife, and retain the perpetual right to harness the power of sun and wind to energize their living space on-site.

The Strehlow-Oberheu Conservation Easement in the northeast corner of Van Buren County features three distinct habitats: early successional forest, ephemeral wetlands, and open fields that have transitioned naturally into prairie in parts while being restored by hand in others. Native flora commonly

found in prairie and savanna habitats is re-establishing itself in the former airfield and pasture that was long farmed by former caretakers. Laura, who holds a bachelor of arts in botany, took time to document many of the woody plants within their 30-acre property boundary and has compiled an impressive list. SWMLC volunteer Becky Csia recently helped to supplement the list with herbaceous plants such as grasses and wildflowers.

As Laura and Walt became acclimated with many of their natural “cohabitants,” they decided the next step was to make sure it all was preserved. Together, their young forests, wetlands, and prairie/savanna habitats provide valuable habitat for terrestrial, avian, and aquatic species, and plentiful food source — seeds, buds, nuts, berries, and other fruits. Along the property’s western boundary, eastern red cedars,

sassafras, staghorn sumac, wild grapes, and black raspberries form an attractive hedgerow for avian friends. Two vastly different vegetation communities can be found in the adjacent field, and they clash along a diagonal line running through the center of it. This inconspicuous line separates drier, fine-sand soils from wet loamy sands that now host a diversity of native prairie species: tall coreopsis, goldenrod, sunflowers, and ironweed among red paniced dogwood and cockspur hawthorn.

Dewberry and shrubby St. John’s Wart offer colored definition to the gentle rise and dip of the open prairie that crawls toward the dense, young forest behind it.

Rich soils along the property’s southeastern edge enable a diverse plant community of young oaks, hickories, pine, and cherries to peer over meadow flowers and berries just east of the homestead. Nearby, a large, memorial weeping willow stands gracefully over an otherwise wild thicket of dogwood, grape, and blackberry, paying homage to family pets that have passed on. Dense natural communities here provide a greenway that connects the swamps of Baseline Creek with the forests of the timber ridge across scenic 2nd Avenue. Autumn color-tour spectators revel in the sights presented along this section of 2nd Avenue, with its cheery stout maples set against lush green pastures dotted with homes and barns, the sharply rising Valparaiso Moraine providing a striking backdrop. Farther along to the east, the moraine is known as Timber Ridge and is home to a local ski area.

The forest and wetlands on the Strehlow-Oberheu property are

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*Laura Strehlow (with Leia) and Walt Oberheu stand on their newly protected property during a cold, sunny January day.
Photo by Meryl Estes.*

Strehlow-Oberheu CE (continued)

contiguous to other mesic habitat to the north that together make up part of the Baseline Creek headwaters complex. These wetlands form seeps and springs that ultimately provide water, sediment, and nutrients to Baseline Creek and downstream fish habitat. Future use of this area is limited through the easement to ensure minimal impact to the forest, wetlands, and an intermittent stream that originates near the property line. The drier woods are populated with oak, elm, beech, hickory, maple, walnut, serviceberry, and flowering dogwood, while seasonally wet areas feature black gum, high-bush blueberry, and American holly among the ephemeral ponds throughout. A precise row of open-grown sugar maples totes low inferior branches and flanks the northern boundary line, providing evidence of a former hedgerow now lost among newer competitors that have closed in.

Walt and Laura have embraced conservation in a broad sense and will place

solar panels among a field of wild companions adjacent to their home this spring. “We can’t be on both sides of the aisle,” Laura insists, noting her early hesitation over sacrificing a bit of aesthetic appeal to get it done. “We are happy the easement ensures that the land is protected and that it allows us to do our part in generating renewable energy.”

The electricity generated from the panels will be purchased by Consumers Energy as part of their Experimental Advanced Renewable Pilot program and fed directly into the grid to increase the utility’s alternative energy supply. This eliminates the need



Tall coreopsis grows in abundance on the easement property. Photo by Laura Strehlow.



Laura and Walt appreciate the color and fruit dewberry brings to their meadow. Photo by Geoffrey D. Cripe.

for batteries, essentially using the grid for storage of the electricity generated. Laura and Walt will then buy back the amount they produce for on-site usage. It is anticipated that the solar panels will provide about one-third of the energy requirements for the property.

SWMLC will continue to focus on connecting several conservation easement properties along the Baseline Creek corridor, which winds its way to the Kalamazoo River. Protecting more of the headwaters adjacent to the Strehlow-Oberheu Conservation Easement is a top objective. We are indebted to Laura and Walt for their gift and are pleased that this easement will accommodate sustainable use objectives moving forward.

— Geoffrey D. Cripe

Remembering Nancy Cutbirth Small

Our community of native plant landscaping and responsible stewardship lost one of its most ardent proponents on November 27, 2009, with the passing of Nancy Cutbirth Small. On a personal level, I am indebted to Nancy for educating me about native plants and for generously sharing so many of them with me, as she did with anyone who was even remotely interested. She wanted everyone to know and appreciate their beauty and value. On a professional level, I feel blessed to have worked with Nancy during the birth of SWMLC's Stewardship Committee, during her service as secretary of our Board of Directors for three years, and as writer and proofreader for this newsletter.

To honor Nancy's legacy, I asked several people to send me their thoughts. We will miss her physical presence, but we will hold her close in our hearts and see her in our gardens. And we will always be grateful to her.
— Pamela W. Larson

Nancy did a lot in the beginning for the Stewardship Committee. She was at the very first organizational meeting and was a stalwart at our workdays. But one of her major contributions was her work on the plantings at the Paw Paw River Preserve. She and Tom did the bulk of the weeding and watering that was so desperately needed during the first two years while the plants got established. Of course, we had a very dry summer, and she needed to haul many old milk jugs of water from home to the preserve.

Her other major contribution to the Stewardship Committee was her bright cheery disposition, hearty laugh, and infectious enthusiasm that surely helped to keep many volunteers going, through rain, snow, poison ivy, wasps, nettles . . .

— Stan Rajnak

Nancy was a kind and gentle person. She dearly loved all of nature — animals as well as plants. Once, when she, Tom and I were walking along a rail trail near Kearny, Nebraska, while attending a Prairie Conference, we came upon a turtle on a bridge over the Platte River. Nancy was so concerned for the turtle that we carried it back to the river bank so it “would be safe!”

— Ken Kirton

“We’ve been lucky,” Nancy wrote in her article, *Reflections of a Charter Member of the Stewardship Committee*, in the SWMLC newsletter ten years ago. She was reflecting three years after formation of the Conservancy’s first Stewardship Committee, and she felt lucky in many ways — we both did.

When we helped to form the Stewardship Committee in 1997, we were both just beginning to explore the dedication that we had undertaken together: saving whatever we could of the threatened biodiversity of the earth, our own home places in particular. Nancy felt lucky to find, in the Conservancy, a “company of people who can tell us where to look and what we are looking at.” She felt lucky to be part of a “real community”; lucky to see so many wonderful sights on Conservancy preserves; lucky to learn from and share with people like Richard Brewer and Stan Rajnak and Ken Kirton, who knew so much more than we did. We both felt blessed because we were learning to *see* — learning to “recognize the beauty and importance of small, unspectacular,” seemingly “insignificant” plants and creatures.

Nancy joined the Conservancy Board of Directors and served as its secretary, but her heart was always in the field, learning, clearing away invasives, saving habitat, giving the native plants room to grow and prosper. And always,

she argued for more education to go hand-in-hand with the hard work. She’d been a student and a teacher all her life; that was her calling. She wanted to learn, to know more about what we were doing, and why.

As the two of us became more involved in establishing the local chapter of Wild Ones, devoted to promoting native plants and natural landscaping on private yards and properties, what we learned in our years with the Conservancy was invaluable. So were the friends we’d made.

In our years together, Nancy often said how lucky we had been to find each other and to find a mission together. The Conservancy was essential to realizing that mission and fulfilling it. She wanted so much to help others to see. To see what’s there, and to care for it. The Conservancy helped her to see, and she in turn wanted to help others. We have indeed been lucky. She was grateful. So am I. Thank you to the Conservancy, from both of us. Thank you, Nancy, from me.

— Tom Small



Tom and Nancy Small

Upcoming Workdays

Registration is requested so that we have enough refreshments and tools for everyone. Please call the office at (269) 324-1600 if you are interested in attending any of these workdays.

Bridges & Trails at Bow in the Clouds Preserve

Saturday, April 17, 9 a.m. to Noon

April showers bring . . . high water. The foot bridges at Bow in the Clouds are in dire need of repair, and the trails are due for some sprucing up for visitors to enjoy spring walks at the preserve. Enjoy the serenade of the frogs and returning birds as we do a little spring cleaning at our beautiful “peace” of nature in Kalamazoo.

Bring: Sturdy footwear (waterproof boots are recommended), work gloves, and loppers and handsaws for branch trimming. SWMLC will provide building materials and refreshments.

Birds & Blooms at Kesling Nature Preserve

Saturday, May 1, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The forests along the Galien River are recognized as one of the premier bird watching sites in Michigan. These woodlands are also home to some of the best wildflower displays as well. The Berrien Birding Club will be hosting a bird watching outing in the morning (check www.berriencounty.org/parks for more details) and, after a picnic lunch, will take some time from looking up at birds to looking down at garlic mustard and multiflora rose. Come lend a hand!

Bring: Binoculars, sturdy footwear, work gloves, and a sack lunch. SWMLC will provide refreshments.



Spring is the time to listen for frogs. Here's a spring peeper in mid peep. Photo by James Harding.

Carpool 11:30 a.m. from Oakland Drive and I-94 Park & Ride in Portage*

Prairie Planting at Chipman Preserve

Saturday, May 15, 9 a.m. to Noon
The Chipman family has grown hundreds of prairie plants, and they are ready to be transplanted into the preserve! Get to know some of these charismatic wildflowers as we move them to their new homes around the entrance of the preserve. They will not only be a lovely welcome to the preserve but an additional tool and valuable seed source as well.

Bring: Work gloves. SWMLC will provide refreshments.

Carpool 8:15 a.m. from SWMLC office at 6851 S. Sprinkle Rd. in Portage*

Introducing KEKA Preserve

Saturday, June 5, 9 a.m. to Noon
Visit one of SWMLC's newest preserves (see story on page 5) and help mark the boundaries and pull garlic mustard. You will get a chance to appreciate the variety of habitats, including spring-fed ponds, oak woodlands, savanna plantings, creeks, and special wildflower propagation gardens created by Wild Ones native landscapers.

Bring: Work gloves and sturdy footwear. SWMLC will provide refreshments.

Carpool 8:15 a.m. from SWMLC office at 6851 S. Sprinkle Rd. in Portage*

Wet Prairie at Wau-Ke-Na

Saturday, June 26, 9 a.m. to Noon
One of the rarest natural communities in the western half of the state is a Lake Plain Prairie that depends on special hydrologic conditions. Come see what is blooming at this tiny remnant and help push back the brushy borders that once threatened to shade it out of existence!

Bring: Work gloves and sturdy footwear. SWMLC will provide refreshments.

Carpool 8:15 a.m. from the SWMLC office at 6851 S. Sprinkle Rd. in Portage*

Oak Openings at Carter Lake

Saturday, July 10, 9 a.m. to Noon
The warm southern slopes of the hills above Carter Lake support some rare wildflowers in the openings between the oaks. Spotted knapweed threatens to crowd them out, so we are looking for help in pulling



Volunteer John Nigg valiantly helped free our pickup truck from the mud during a Wednesday Workday Warrior battle. The mud won. Photo by Roxanne Nigg.

out this noxious weed. It's a worthwhile cause and a good excuse to enjoy the “north woods feel” of Carter Lake Preserve.

Bring: Work gloves and sturdy footwear. SWMLC will provide refreshments.

Carpool 7:30 a.m. from SWMLC office at 6851 S. Sprinkle Rd. in Portage*

More workdays ahead . . .

Habitat Management at Sand Creek,

August 14, 9 a.m. to Noon

Bittersweet Morning at Coon Hollow,

September 18, 9 a.m. to Noon

Join our weekly volunteer group — the Wednesday Workday Warriors. Every week is an outing to a different preserve to help steward our natural areas. Contact Julie at the office.

** To carpool or to get directions: Call Julie Lewandowski at the office at (269) 324-1600 by the Thursday before the workday.*

Researching and Restoring the Complexi

The first time I ever saw a Mitchell's satyr butterfly was when I was a Michigan State University student working on an independent research project at Coldwater Fen in southern Michigan's Branch County. Since the Mitchell's satyr is on the federal endangered species list, a permit was required to work at this site. Daria Hyde, a Michigan Natural Feature's Inventory scientist, had such a permit and agreed to let me accompany her. In return, I would assist her with a butterfly survey that she was doing on the property.

Upon that first sighting, I was struck by the graceful way the Mitchell's satyr meandered through the dense hummocks of narrow-leaf sedges and maze-like thickets of shrubby vegetation. They do not furiously flap their wings, but instead, as I later learned, subtly and rhythmically contract a muscle in their thorax to produce the graceful, undulating flight that I witnessed that day. It occurred to me that this butterfly instinctively (or maybe practically) comprehended the minimal effort needed to stay airborne — the true definition of energy conservation. In reality, there was purpose in its flight. Upon emerging from a cocoon in

late June, the Mitchell's satyr will have less than three weeks to find a mate and reproduce before dying. This takes place while battling periodic heavy rain and thunderstorms, high temperatures characteristic of their environment, other harsh weather conditions, predators, and destruction of their habitat.

The Mitchell's satyr butterfly can only be found in groundwater-fed wetlands known as fens. Fen characteristics include rich, deep, dark organic soil and a patchy occurrence of shrubby vegetation, usually poison sumac. There is often a sparse overstory of tamarack trees. Land use practices and landscape alteration have resulted in a loss or severe degradation of many of Michigan's wetlands, including fens. These alterations have resulted in an increase of invasive species and an unnatural overabundance of the native ones. The Mitchell's satyrs depend on the sedge, *Carex stricta*, for food. Increased nutrient loading through run-off and increased woody vegetation, the result of fire suppression, has led to the decline of *Carex stricta*. Increased isolation of butterfly populations can be attributed to fragmentation brought about by human land use



Efforts to maintain and improve the ecological health of fens across southern Michigan and northern Indiana are moving into high gear, thanks to a federally funded State Wildlife Grant awarded to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources & Environment (MDNRE). Over \$850,000 was awarded to MDNRE to work with partners to manage fen habitat that support rare species, including Eastern Massasauga rattlesnakes and Mitchell's satyr butterflies. SWMLC is receiving a portion of those funds to restore habitats at several of our preserves, including Coldwater Fen, Dowagiac Fen, Jephtha Lake Fen, Bow in the Clouds, and KEKA (find out more about KEKA on page 5).

Almost all of our major rivers and streams in southern Michigan originate in fens. Clean, cold groundwater bubbles up in springs and seeps that quickly cut channels between the sedges, merging with other tributaries to form small streams. Braids of these streams are the capillaries to our rivers, providing clear and cool oxygen-rich waters to the arterial network of waterways that make their way into the Great Lakes.

1. Prairie fens are rich sources of diversity and clean water. 2. Groundwater from fens form headwater streams to most of southern Michigan's rivers. 3. Researchers are collecting specimens of species like pitcher's plant, grass pink orchid, wild iris, sundew, and a dozen other species. 4. The Toledo Zoo carry a tub of sedges into a fen to collect Mitchell's satyr eggs for captive rearing. 5. Prescribed fires replenish nutrients and the fen and promote native vegetation. 6. Eastern box turtles find food and shelter in fens and the surrounding upland. 7. The state-threatened cousin of the common milkweed. 8. Four-toed salamanders live and breed in the spongy mosses of fens. 9. Tamaracks are common in fens and provide habitat for many species. 10. A Baltimore checkerspot butterfly takes a drink from pale Indian plantain, a state special concern species. 11. Tree swallows nest along the edges of wetland meadows. 12. Images 11, 13, 15 by Tyler Bassett. Image 17 by Roger Myers.

ties of Michigan's Richest Habitat — Fen

practices. Today, there are only 16 isolated populations of Mitchell's satyrs remaining.

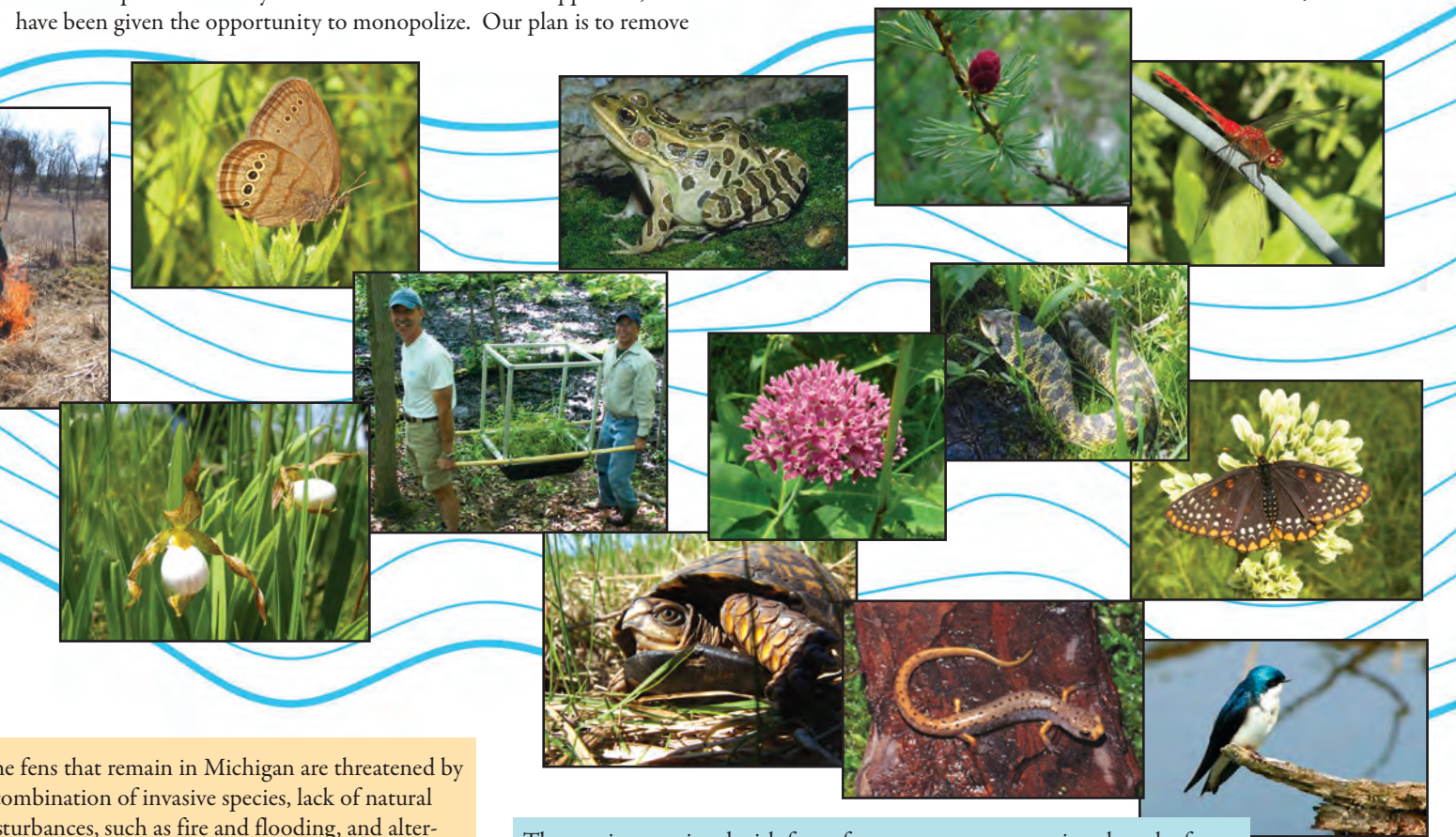
Coldwater Fen, owned and managed by SWMLC, is one of the several Mitchell's satyr-occupied sites that are monitored as part of the federal endangered species recovery act. For the past nine years, SWMLC has been keeping records of how many butterflies are at this site. Observed behavioral differences in the sexes (males rest in shrubs while females find shaded, low-lying areas in the sedges) indicate that there may be an advantage to the arrangement of shrubs in the matrix of sedges where females lay eggs. Noting this observation, SWMLC has begun an investigation to determine micro-habitat conditions that may correlate to increased presence of the species.

A more thorough understanding of how Mitchell's satyrs use woody species for structure will improve our management plans. Naturally occurring fires used to move from adjacent oak savanna and prairies into fens and kept shrubs at bay. Since these fires have been suppressed, shrubs have been given the opportunity to monopolize. Our plan is to remove

all non-native shrubs and grasses and, if warranted, thin native trees and shrubs. Prescribed burning can help with this (we did one last spring), but because the dried grasses that are the main fuel source in a naturally functioning ecosystem are not as abundant in a degraded ecosystem, mechanical removal of trees and shrubs can be more efficient. The goal is to get more sunlight to the ground to stimulate the growth of the native sedges.

It's been over five years since my first sighting of a Mitchell's satyr, but the image is still fresh in my mind. I am lucky enough to now be working for SWMLC and caring for many of our preserves. One of our goals is to promote a more science-based methodology in the approach to land management. We will be submitting our findings to Daria Hyde and Michigan Natural Features Inventory in hopes that they will find our data worthwhile and will pass it on to other organizations involved in the conservation of rare species.

— Randy Counterman



The fens that remain in Michigan are threatened by a combination of invasive species, lack of natural disturbances, such as fire and flooding, and alteration of local hydrology. Restoration efforts can reduce invasive species and mimic natural disturbances. However, the alteration of local hydrology can rarely, if ever, be undone. Long-term health of fens will eventually rely on protecting land.

The species associated with fens often garner more attention than the fen itself. While protecting one of the rarest butterflies on the continent makes for a good story, and beautiful orchids and charming turtles offer great photo opportunities, fen conservation is really about protecting one of our most valuable natural resources. Fen systems are complex systems that provide our region with clean water and exceptional biodiversity.

Continually gathering information on the plants and animals of fens and their interaction in this hydrologically complex habitat. 4. A single hummock in a fen can support... 6. White lady's slipper orchids thrive with fires in fens. 7. Mitchell's satyrs are indicators of high-quality wetlands. 8. Mitch Magdich and Dr. Peter Tolson of the... 10. Northern leopard frogs used to be the most common frog in Michigan but now are only found in areas with clean water such as fens. 11. Purple milkweed is a... 14. Ruby meadowhawks hunt fens for flies and mosquitoes. 15. Hognose snakes are masters of bluff and are often mistaken for rattlesnakes. and forage for insects over the streams and sedges. **Photo credits:** Images 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16 by Nate Fuller. Image 3 by Geoffrey Cripe. Images 10, 12 by James

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Thanks also to all who renewed their membership, supported us through their United Way program, or contributed to our annual campaign, birdathon, and other fundraisers.

Our sincere apologies for any omissions.

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

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Now Accepting On-Line Membership Donations

SWMLC went on-line with a new database at the end of 2009 (see more below). We are now equipped to accept credit card

donations for membership from our web site at www.SWMLC.org. Click on the "Donate Online" button.

New Database and Facebook

Our new database is eTapestry, and we're still working out some minor glitches that are normal when converting from an old database to a new one. Please bear with us while we smooth those rough edges. If something looks askew on any mailings you receive from our office, please let us know.

We're on Facebook! Become a fan and stay current with our latest news and spur-of-the-moment field trips and nature walks. Check out our latest preserve photos.

Conservation Properties For Sale

If you would like to live on a beautiful property that is forever protected, visit our web site (www.SWMLC.org) and click on the "Conservation Buyer Program" link. We currently list three properties: two in Allegan County (one on Lake Doster) and one property in Calhoun County on Lake Waubascon.

The SWMLC conservation buyer program is designed to connect conservation-minded buyers interested in purchasing natural lands with conservation-minded landowners who want to sell to a buyer interested in protecting the conservation values they've grown to cherish:

* Seller offers land at market value and buyer purchases with a pledge to restrict with a conservation easement. This option makes the buyer eligible for conservation tax incentives.

* Seller restricts land with a conservation easement and sells to a buyer interested in a protected property (conservation easement) with potentially reduced property taxes. This option makes the seller eligible for conservation tax incentives.

In both examples, the conservation easement guarantees that the land will remain protected forever.

For more information, call Julie Lewandowski at the SWMLC office at (269) 324-1600.

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Consider Supporting Conservation Easement Monitoring and Legal Defense

In each issue of *Landscapes*, we highlight current land protection projects, usually including a property that has been protected with a conservation easement. The article most often highlights conservation values that are protected forever, such as a prairie fen or oak-hickory forest, the reason behind the donor's gift — their unique story — and what motivated them to work with the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy.

But the signing and recording of the conservation easement to the deed is only the beginning of SWMLC's work. To ensure that the landowner's story becomes a legacy, SWMLC must annually monitor their property and, if necessary, enforce easement restrictions. This commitment to the donor is our perpetual responsibility which we fully embrace and, as a qualified organization recognized by the IRS, requires substantive yearly documentation.

There are several measures of our conservation easement program's fitness. We must demonstrate that we visit each conservation easement annually, adopt policies and procedures on program management, and establish the financial resources necessary to support monitoring costs and, if required, legally enforce the easement's restrictions. These are all components of the Land Trust Alliance's Accreditation Program that we must adhere to in order to receive accreditation. SWMLC will be applying for accreditation within the next year.

The greatest challenge is developing the financial resources to support our conservation easement program. That is why we ask easement donors to consider making a financial gift to our monitoring and legal defense fund. Most of our easement donors understand and agree that SWMLC's vigilance is worthy of a

financial gift. But not all easement donors have the capacity to make this gift, regardless of their commitment to conservation.

To address this need, SWMLC's board of directors is exploring several alternatives geared toward increasing our monitoring and legal defense fund. One alternative is to identify donors who are interested in helping us grow this fund and who are willing to provide a financial match to conservation easement donors who can commit to a gift.

Board member Todd Sanford has indicated that this is how he would like to support SWMLC's mission. "I recognize the importance of creating financial sustainability for this program," says Todd. "And I am personally committed to promoting this program and securing the support necessary to make it a success."

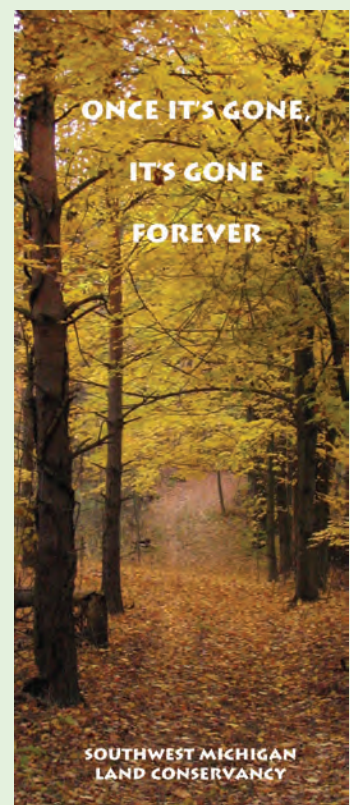
Another option is to increase membership in SWMLC's Oak Legacy, a group of supporters who are leaving a planned gift in their estate. Increasing the membership of this group and identifying contributors who are specifically committed to supporting the conservation easement program are priority goals for SWMLC during the next several years.

Property owners protect their land with a conservation easement not only for the tax benefits, but because they care about the beautiful natural, historic, and scenic landscapes they will be leaving to future generations. Following Todd's lead to provide matching funds for a gift or participating in the Oak Legacy and committing to a planned gift for SWMLC's monitoring and defense fund are ways all of us can participate in a conservation legacy for southwest Michigan.

— Peter D. Ter Louw

Oak Legacy Members

Judy Mayo and Sid Aaron
Paula M. Allred
Jacqueline B. Anderson
Joan Orman and Eric Bekker
Susan L. Bond
Kristi and Stephen Chapman
Amy and Jason Cherry
Susan Gray
Joel and Barbara Huber
Kensinger and Alice Jones
Patricia Smetana and Thomas Krol
George H. Lauff
Alan G. Mueller
Eileen L. Oehler
Stan and Connie Rajnak
Lawrence J. Sehy
Thomas H. Seiler
Roger and Nancy Taylor
Anonymous (4)



2009 Year-End Report

10 Land Projects Completed in 2009

We had a very successful year of land protection in 2009, completing ten projects in four counties for a total of 786 acres. With three outright property donations, SWMLC's preserve holdings now exceed 2,000 acres, with total protected land of over 8,300 acres.

In Kalamazoo County, SWMLC completed two conservation easements, adding 154 acres to the 478 acres of Boudeman Family protected land along BC Avenue and C Avenue on the west side of Gull Lake. The two properties are a mix of farmland with prime agricultural soils, early successional forest, wetlands, and frontage on Grassy Lake. Along East Main in Comstock Township, SWMLC received as a donation 33.5 acres of land known as the KEKA Preserve, adding protected land within the Comstock Creek watershed which includes Marc's Marsh and the Richmonds' Nature's Acres conservation easement.

In Van Buren County, SWMLC acquired a 65-acre property in Paw Paw Township, a donation that was leveraged to procure \$100,000 in MDNRE watershed management funding to restore wetlands, and in neighboring Waverly Township, 41 acres of lush, forested wetland was donated to us just north of the village of Paw Paw.

In Pine Grove Township, SWMLC completed a conservation easement on 30 acres of successional forest, wetlands, and prairie, a project protecting the headwaters and floodplain of Baseline Creek in Van Buren and Allegan counties. And in South Haven Township, we finalized a conservation easement on the Van Buren County-owned 17-acre North Point conservation area, forested back dune with approximately 300 feet of frontage on Lake Michigan.

Our work in Barry County consisted of a conservation easement on 299 acres in Prairieville Township, protecting a mix of prime farmland, forest, and wetlands with over 2,500 feet of frontage on Miller Lake. SWMLC also continued work to protect the Prairieville Creek watershed by purchasing a conservation easement on 13 acres along the creek, linking two previously completed conservation easements.

And in Calhoun County, SWMLC completed a conservation easement on a 133-acre Centennial Farm in Bedford Township, protecting over 2,000 feet of frontage on Waubascon Lake and Creek.

Also in 2009, SWMLC completed two conservation planning projects: the Barry State Game Area (BSGA) conservation plan, created to protect land in and around the BSGA to reduce habitat fragmentation, and the Black River watershed management plan to protect land critical to water resources, which also includes an analysis that prioritizes farmland protection.

At Wau-Ke-Na we began to implement several of the projects identified in the restoration master plan, which included turning 40 acres of former cropland into grassland and constructing a parking area for new public access into the preserve. After one year of management on the lake plain prairie, the population of ladies' tresses orchids increased from one to a dozen.

We continue invasive species management and restoration work at Chipman Preserve, opening up an additional 15 acres to promote savanna and starting a native plant garden that will serve as a source for transplanting and education. The Wednesday Workday Warriors and weekend stewardship crew conducted 30 workdays at 20 preserves, and we used prescribed fire on 150 acres at four preserves. We continued to assist in the long-term monitoring efforts at several Mitchell's satyr sites, including two SWMLC preserves.

And 2009 saw both the initiation as well as completion of several research projects with students from Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, and Michigan State University. Project topics ranged from turtle habitat usage to native bee populations to natural disturbance regimes on vegetation.

SWMLC's board and staff are constantly seeking ways to improve and strengthen our efforts to increase land conservation in southwest Michigan. But, ultimately, our success relies on the commitment of our volunteers, donors, and members. Thank you for your continued support and commitment.

— Peter D. Ter Louw

Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Revenue

Membership Dues	\$ 39,777
Contributions	\$ 313,179
Grants	\$ 103,559
Investment Income	\$ (1,724)
Special Events and Other Income	\$ 3,828
Total Support and Revenue	\$ 458,619

Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Expenses

Program Services	\$ 389,150
Grants	\$ 54,079
Management and Fundraising	\$ 78,491
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 521,720
Additions to Designated Funds	\$ (63,101)
Total Expenses and Additions to Designated Funds	\$ 458,619

Board of Directors

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

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Website: www.SWMLC.org



Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy

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\$15,000 Woollam Challenge Issued for 2010!

Thanks to support from new and existing members, we more than matched the J.A. Woollam Foundation's 2009 Challenge in the amount of \$10,000. We raised over \$36,000 in gifts that we anticipate will remain as continued commitments and will grow over time. Thank you to everyone who participated. And a big thank you to Dr. John A. Woollam and his associates at the J.A. Woollam Foundation for their continued generosity.

And speaking of continued generosity, we are pleased to announce that the J.A. Woollam Foundation has issued *another* challenge to SWMLC during 2010, in the amount of \$15,000! This new challenge will function as last year's and will match all new memberships, all lapsed memberships, any increase in membership level categories, and any donation greater than \$500.

Now is the time to make every dollar! If you're not yet a member, please consider becoming a member in 2010. If you're already a member and can afford to give at the next level, please do so. Your support helps us 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.

Thank you!