



LITTLE TRAVERSE CONSERVANCY



Happy Holidays!

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Catherine Seiberling-Stewart Preserve

Marquette Island Preserve Secured Through Bargain Sale



This past fall, Bonnie Stewart Mikkelsen sold 193 acres of Marquette Island along more than a mile of Lake Huron to the Conservancy at a significant bargain sale. The property, which has been named the Catherine Seiberling-Stewart Preserve in honor of Bonnie's mother, lies within a major migration path and includes examples of globally rare plant communities. Here, Bonnie explains her feelings about the land's protection.

It is quite difficult to express the broad mix of emotions I have felt with the Conservancy's acquisition of our beloved Marquette Island property. The purchase fulfills the promise I made to my mother in March of 1988, the day she died, which was to protect the land in every way possible. It fulfills the need, deeply instilled in me by my parents, to demonstrate to the Les Cheneaux community our appreciation for what it has given our families through five generations. We have never taken it for granted. It fulfills the desire my husband, Lars, and I have for our children and grandchildren to experience the incredible world of nature and its gift of solitude, combined with their heritage, in order to inspire

them to fight intelligently and diligently for the preservation of earth and mankind. In our minds, it fulfills the standards to which Little Traverse Conservancy so wisely adheres in its mission to provide the broadest possible benefits to the communities it serves through education and protection of their respective aesthetics.

And then there are the discomforts of letting go, of wondering if all bases have been covered, of trying to anticipate the unknown and the structuring of ecology, and dealing with this political world. Everything seems to be in such a fragile state, having to depend almost solely on man's intelligence. *continued next page*



Camp Wildwood - 1907 The Seiberling family's first camp in the Les Cheneaux.



Cate Seiberling Stewart with John Osoqwin.



Bonnie and Lars Mikkelsen with three of their grandchildren.

continued from cover

In the late 1890s, four brothers and sisters of the Seiberling family from Akron, Ohio, began acquiring lands for summer retreats along the western end of Marquette Island. In June 1907, at nine months of age, my mother, Catherine Seiberling (babe in arms in photo to left), began her first summer at their camp, SunSands, in the cusp of Marquette Bay. Her memories of childhood were centered there, instilling in her an uncommon bond with nature. Her exceptional marriage to my father, H. Bartlett Stewart, Jr., reinforced this as he, too, loved the outdoors. In 1945 they purchased over 200 acres on the south shore of Marquette Island. There they built their beloved camp, Windswept.

Like my mother, my childhood memories are centered in the Les Cheneaux. John Osoqwin, whose grandfather was the last chief of the Chippewas in the territory, was SunSands's caretaker and a major figure in our lives. My mother attributed her extensive knowledge of birds, wild flowers, ferns, fungi, and their whereabouts, to the relationships – such as John's – she established there over the years. All this was passed on to me. Even in the midst of Seattle's dreary winters, I can transport myself into that beautiful world of cedar bogs, sand and cobbled beaches, and the great expanse of wild and wonderful Lake Huron, freighters edging the horizon between Pt. Fuyard and the giant turtle, Mackinac. I can smell it, I can hear it, I can feel it, as can our children and grandchildren.

When my mother became terminally ill, I began writing a storybook-cookbook of the area, "Hollyhocks & Radishes." Initially, it was a means to keep her at Windswept, where she could thrive in its tranquility, reflecting on her remarkable life and marriage (my father was dying of Alzheimer's Disease). She stretched her medical prognosis of only two months to live into three years, with the book expanding in accordance. I

didn't publish it until she was gone, dedicating it to her memory and the song of the white throated sparrow, which my father would whistle to let her know he was nearby.

If my parents and their parents were alive today, they would bless what Little Traverse Conservancy and its benefactors have made possible. Along with the preservation of a piece of nature, at its best, the opportunity is being given for others to continue to experience, understand, and pass on its preciousness, for eons to come.

Catherine Seiberling Stewart's favorite quote, which she'd use to preface her many birding and wildflower journals, was "*Lost to the casual observer but there for the truly discerning.*"

To all of you involved, Lars and I, and our 15 children and 17 grandchildren, and those yet to be, thank you from our hearts. May we cross paths along the cedar bogs!

Little Traverse Conservancy would also like to acknowledge and thank Kent Gilges of The Nature Conservancy for his assistance with this project.

"...the opportunity is being given for others to continue to experience, understand, and pass on its preciousness, for eons to come."

- Bonnie Mikkelsen

Marquette Island: Part of a 'Last Great Place'

In 1993, the northern shore of Lake Huron was designated a "**Last Great Place**" by The Nature Conservancy, a world leader in natural lands conservation. The Les Cheneaux Area is at the very heart of this "natural wonder of the world." This section of Lake Huron coastline is some of the most biologically productive habitat found in the state.

The new Catherine Seiberling-Stewart Nature Preserve abuts the 942-acre Northern Lake Huron Preserve protected by the Michigan chapter of The Nature Conservancy. The Little Traverse Conservancy also owns 305 acres of preserve land on the island which was protected by the Les Cheneaux Club, Les Cheneaux Foundation and other donors.

A significant portion of the funds used to purchase the Catherine Seiberling-Stewart Preserve came from a grant received through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act Program.

Quiet Crusader Fights the Good Fight



The Seidel Farm. Inset photos: Isabel Seidel (top) and Joe and Gail Seidel, with daughter Amanda.

Phil Ohmer

Self described as a “farming soldier,” Joe Seidel is on a mission to protect land.

Three years ago, after more than 20 years of military service in the U.S. Army, Joe and his wife, Gail, returned to semi-retire on Joe’s 250-acre family farm near Charlevoix. Upon their arrival, they discovered that the farm was included in a proposed development extending from the brand new high school built off of Marion Center Road.

“I knew I had to come up with my own plan if I wanted to save our farmland,” Joe said. “Land conservation became my plan.”

One of Joe’s most immediate tactics was to help his neighbors, the Martincheks, understand what might be possible for their land which was first in line for development if a controversial sewer expansion from the site of the new Charlevoix High School became a reality. One day, Joe printed out a page from the Conservancy’s web site, walked out to where Joe Martinchek was plowing a field and handed him the page.


Joe Martinchek contacted the Conservancy staff to learn more. Soon, as the local township and many landowners expressed clear intentions to keep the area in rural agriculture rather than growing sprawl, a natural partnership took shape.

Last spring, the Martincheks finalized the sale of development rights from their 225-acre farm to the Little Traverse Conservancy.

“We not only have Joe Seidel to thank for instigating this land conservation, but the Seidels also put forth a challenge grant to inspire fundraising for that project,” said Ty Ratliff, land protection specialist for the Conservancy. “Joe is a quiet crusader. He is modest, straightforward, and community oriented. When we first met to go over conservation options for his own land, he shook my hand and said, ‘My land will one day be forever preserved. I assure you of that.’”

And not missing a beat, this fall Joe and Gail Seidel donated a conservation easement on their own 250-acre property which lies immediately east of the Martinchek property. In their conservation easement, the Seidels have retained no division or development rights for the future, a tremendous gesture considering the size and development potential of the land.

When asked where his land ethic came from, Joe Seidel notes that his parents, Francis and Isabelle Seidel moved to Charlevoix in 1954, when they purchased 180 acres to begin to make a living by farming. Through dairy and mixed crops, the Seidels worked the land for several years. Joe was also an eagle scout as a young man.

“Gail and I had hoped, and still hope to get involved in some form of ‘value-added’ agriculture,” said Joe. He jokingly added, “I’ve noticed that we have a lot more frogs around here than we used to, which is a result of changes in the water table affected by the development higher in the watershed. Maybe we’ll become frog farmers!” 

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Bradford D. White Remembered

The Conservancy was saddened by the recent loss of Brad White, a long-time friend and supporter of the Conservancy and member of the organization's Finance Committee with special interest in the Lake Charlevoix Watershed region. We offer our sincere sympathies to Brad's wife, Van, and their family. We gratefully acknowledge all that the Whites have contributed to land conservation in this area.

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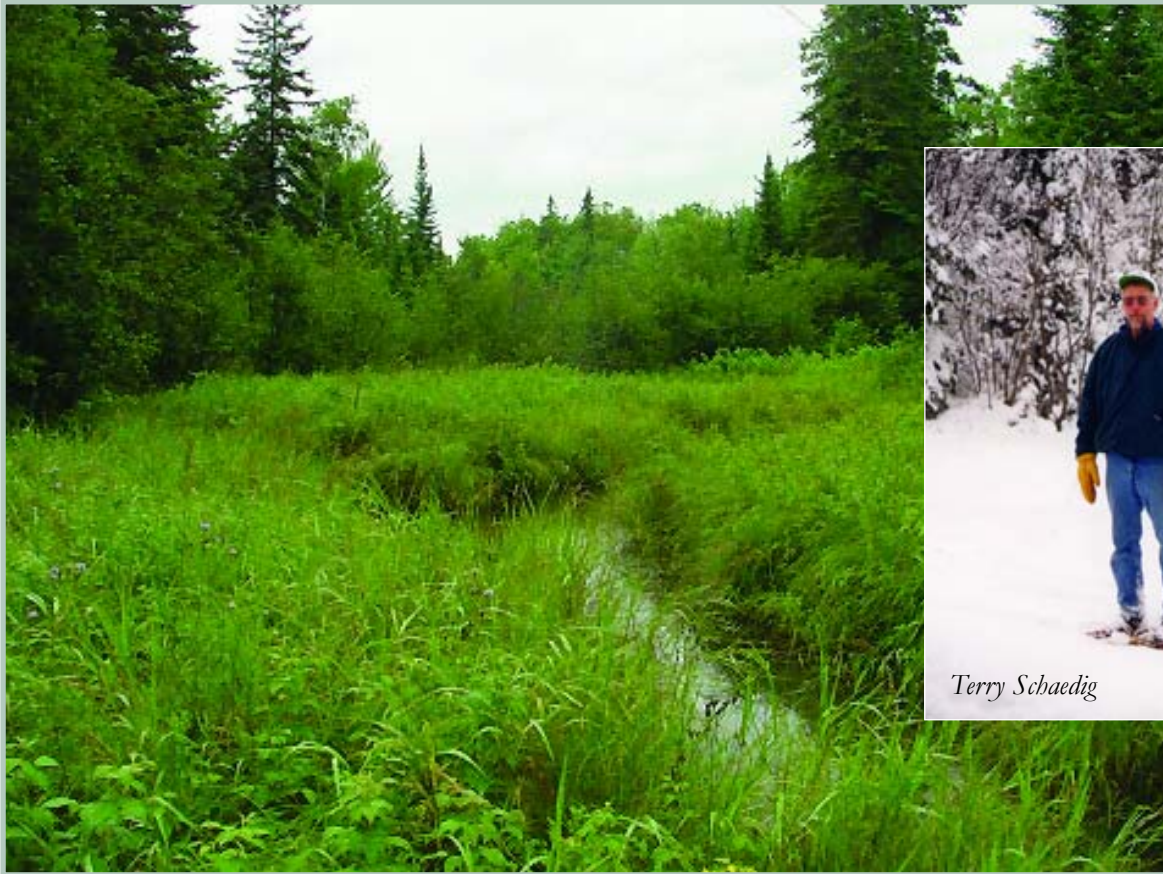
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Terry Schaedig

Migratory Waterfowl Habitat Protected Through Easement

A 100-acre Chippewa County property is now securely protected in its pristine character, thanks to a conservation easement donated by landowner Terry Schaedig. The land includes a mosaic of wetlands and upland ridges and is heavily forested with wetland associated species. A multitude of wildlife including bear, bobcat, and otter have been seen on the property along with tracks of wolf and fisher.

The newly protected land buffers a region identified as the Munuscong Wildlife Area which is known as a primary focus area of a national program to protect migratory waterfowl species. The property also includes a half mile frontage on Rapson Creek, a tributary into the Munuscong River which flows into Munuscong Lake.

Growing up in Cedarville, Terry recalls

that the property was originally part of a youth camp and, visiting the land with his dad as a kid, he realized how special the land was. Several years ago, the camp was sold to U.S. Steel which, in turn, sold off portions to individuals, including Terry.

Since building a log cabin on the property, the land has been his primary residence and now, as he currently works as a conservationist in Minnesota, it is his hunting retreat.

“Terry’s stewardship vision and knowledge of timber management made drafting the conservation easement an educational and rewarding experience for me,” said Ty Ratliff, land protection specialist for the Conservancy.

“It was a pleasure working with Conservancy staff,” said Terry. “I am well pleased with our final document and feel that it is just what I had hoped to achieve.”

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and the Conservancy which allows the landowner to permanently protect the natural and scenic resources of their land while retaining ownership and control. Easement terms typically restrict future development on the land, but are tailored to fit each property and the owner's conservation needs. Properties protected with a conservation easement are privately owned and not open to the public. Possible tax advantages may help offset the cost of donating a conservation easement.

Scenic Views Along Bike Trail and US-31 Protected

Longtime Conservancy supporter Rik Lobenherz recently took a step to further land protection along a stretch of US-31 that will enhance the beauty of that travel corridor for both motorists and recreational trail users. Lobenherz amended a conservation easement over his private land, ensuring that 1,800 additional feet of road and pathway will forever be void of development.

“I strongly believe in and support the Conservancy’s initiative to have a significant role in preserving and enhancing the landscape between Charlevoix and Petoskey,” Lobenherz said. “With the completion of the bike path and the continuance of conservation easements such as this, we can have a model corridor linking our communities.”


The newly protected property includes nearly 20 acres that lie adjacent to 94 acres protected in 1995 by Lobenherz and his partners with the Charlevoix County Club. All told, a total of 1.2 miles of continuous scenic road and pathway are included within the protected land.

“Everyone who travels this stretch of US-31 can be grateful for the foresight and generosity that Rik has had,” said Tom Bailey, Executive Director for Little Traverse Conservancy. “None of these views can be taken for granted anymore, but nothing is more permanent than land protect-



A total of 1.2 miles of US-31 and bike path frontage are now permanently protected thanks to the donation of a recently expanded conservation easement.

ed this way.”


“Rik Lobenherz has worked with the Conservancy on a number of US-31 corridor projects in the past two decades and has been a consistent land protection leader in Charlevoix County,” Bailey added. 



Landowner Protects Island Property Before Sale

As a member of the Conservancy’s Les Cheneaux Steering Committee, Frank Harding has long endorsed land protection in that region. “If a cottage is built on every 100 feet of shoreline in the Les Cheneaux Islands, it will be a sad state of affairs.”

Recently, he and his family decided the time had come to sell some of their La Salle Island property to use the money on a mainland property for their growing family. But before listing the property, he contacted the Conservancy.

“I bought the property in question to prevent it from being divided into 100 foot lots. It seemed to me that the kind of neighbor I wanted on the island is the kind who would appreciate a 535 foot lot and who would not want to subdivide it. My hope is that my easement will encourage my neighbors to use the same device to preserve the whole south end of LaSalle Island.” 

The aerial shows the location of the Harding Conservation Easement on La Salle Island. Inset: Frank Harding on the easement protected property.

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 Mr. and Mrs. Thomas D. Pointner
 Polly's Planting and Plucking
 Dr. and Mrs. Jeffrey L. Porter
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 Performance Engineers, Inc.
 Prescription Services
 Preston Feather Building Centers
 The Print Shop
 Dr. and Mrs. John Rasmussen
 Real Estate One - Charlevoix
 Dr. and Mrs. Paul W. Reed

Mr. and Mrs. E. Lawrence Rellinger
 Republic Bank
 Resort Reservations
 Dr. and Mrs. Craig Reynolds
 Dr. and Mrs. Jeffrey B. Ricks
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 Dr. Bradford Rowe
 Ryde Marina Inc.
 J. D. and Jeannie Scheerens
 Stefan and Kim Scholl
 Mr. and Mrs. Carl E. Schuster
 Dr. Gary and Colleen Shaw
 Shepler's, Inc.
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 Shirt Tales, Inc.
 Silver Fox Resort
 Hugh Melling and Denise Simon
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 Ms. Sara E. Smith
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 Taylor Rental Center
 Timbertech
 Dr. and Mrs. Robert C. Tollas
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 Dr. and Mrs. Victor H. Tsaloff
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 Two Loons Lagoon, Inc.
 Van's Business Machines, Inc.
 VanDam Marine Craft
 Dr. and Mrs. Ronald D. VandenBrink
 Jan VandenBrink Studio
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 C. Douglas and Gayle Novak
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Business Member Profile Bob and Mary Keedy

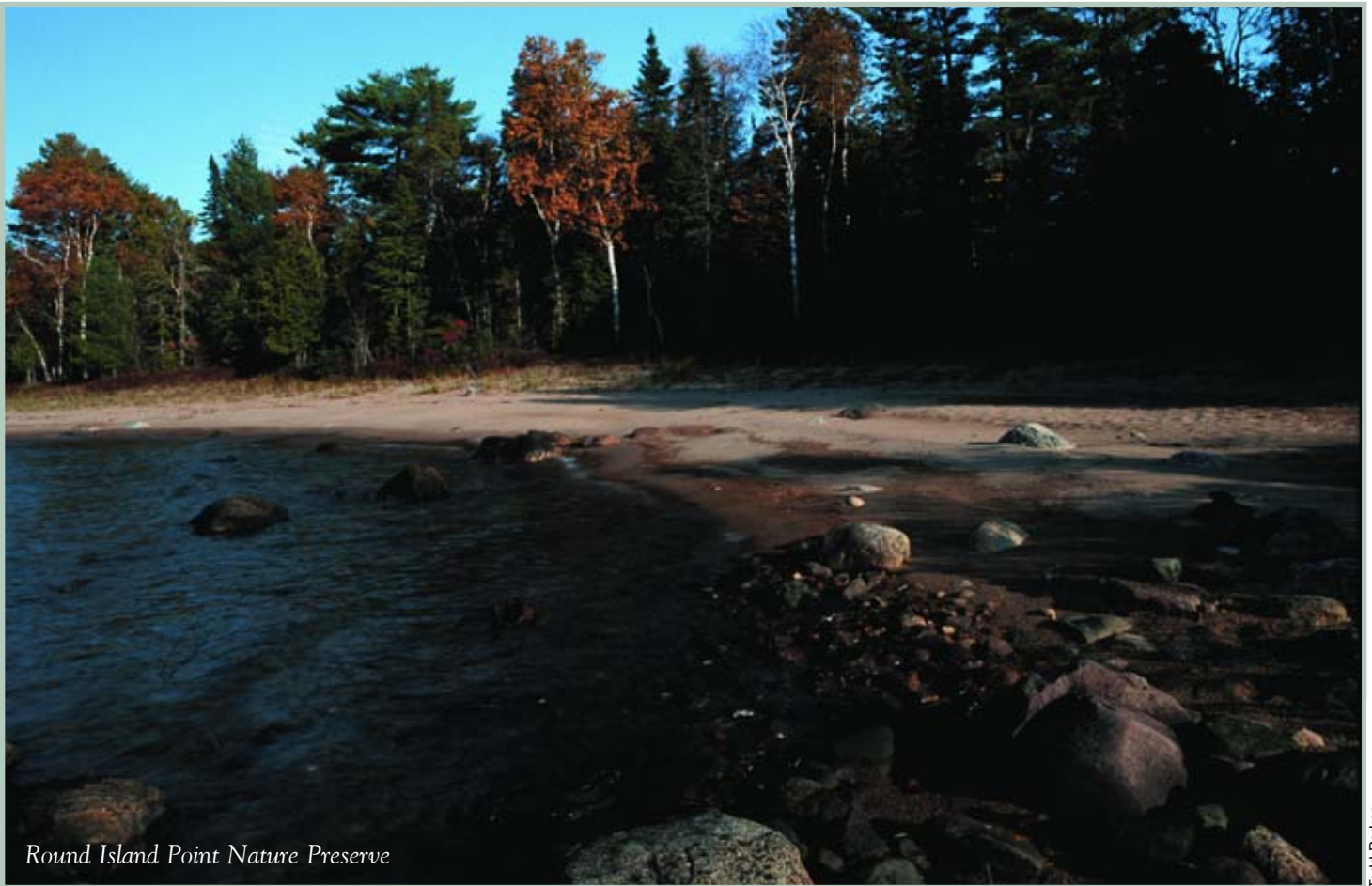
The Little Traverse Conservancy is proud to profile business owners Bob and Mary Keedy who have operated Roast & Toast Café and Coffee on Lake Street in downtown Petoskey since 1993 and have been Conservancy members since 1994.

After many years working in several southern states, Bob and Mary decided to start their own business in a part of the world where they wanted to be: northern Michigan. This past May, their business Roast & Toast celebrated its 10-year anniversary of providing a place of warm, eclectic comfort for the body and soul to downtown Petoskey. The Keedys have also operated Petoskey's The City Park Grill with partners Dick and Laura Dinon since 1997. As outdoor-loving people, the couple became aware of land trust work through the national organization, The Nature Conservancy, and they believe the whole concept of land conservation is great for this region.

"I've noticed how the Little Traverse Conservancy is good at presenting a balanced approach to land protection," said Bob. "When we are polar about the issues of growth and development, we create problems."

Bob said he feels the land protection has been good for their businesses. "It is all very positive. People love to come here because of the beautiful resources and the efforts that have been made to protect them."

The Keedys and their two children Liz, 16, and Joe, 11, enjoy walking at the McCune Nature Preserve and Round Lake Preserve.



Round Island Point Nature Preserve

Todd Parker

Largest Preserve Expanded

The Conservancy's Round Island Point Nature Preserve has been expanded by 65 acres and a quarter mile of water frontage, bringing its size to 775 acres and 2¼ miles frontage on Lake Superior and the St. Mary's River.

"The large scale conservation achieved through this preserve provides habitat for the big species that require spacious ranges," said Kieran Fleming, land protection specialist for the Conservancy. "Moose, bear, and wolf have all been observed here. In addition, the preserve offers habitat for birds that

migrate across Lake Superior."

The original Round Island Point Preserve was donated to the Michigan chapter of The Nature Conservancy by the Finlayson Family. In 2000, The Nature Conservancy transferred the property to the Little Traverse Conservancy and subsequent additions have been purchased.

A winter snowshoe field trip will be held at the preserve on February 28. For more information, contact our office at (231) 347-0991.

It Takes A Village...

Nearly 150 students from Brimley schools along with ten teachers and nine community volunteers cleared more than a mile of trail at the Round Island Point Nature Preserve on October 16. The Conservancy offers a huge thank you to the Brimley community for this effort that will make the preserve more enjoyable for visitors. A special thank you goes to teacher John Morrison who contacted volunteers, collected tools, flagged trails, and generally orchestrated the event. Wow!



Looking for a few Young and Junior Naturalists

Do you know of a young person between the ages of 8 and 12 who loves to be outdoors? The Young Naturalist Club is an active club created for local children within the Little Traverse Conservancy's service area of Mackinac, Chippewa, Cheboygan, Emmet, and Charlevoix counties. Programs and activities linked with the club encourage local children to explore their natural surroundings - near their home or at a nearby natural area. There is no charge to join the club and benefits include quarterly newsletters, monthly seasonal activity pages, nature guides, notifications of meetings and summer programs, contests, and more!

Do you know a young person who is older than 13 and might be interested in helping out with the Young Naturalist programs? The new "Junior Naturalist" program is a great way to help our teens try their hand at being leaders themselves. To find out more, give Alison or Marci a call at (231) 347-0991 or visit our website at www.landtrust.org.



The many benefits of joining the Young Naturalist Club include mail that is sent to your home such as those items pictured above right. Last year, members visited the Andreae Preserve at different seasons to hike, play nature games, and learn about the Pigeon River habitat (right).



More than 2,800 people participated in a Conservancy-sponsored education program this fall.

More than 1,200 students were involved in Conservancy regular fall field trip programs and enjoyed catching insects, finding salamanders, and gathering a variety of seeds adapted for different ways of travel. New this year was a partnership with Raven Hill Discovery Center through a program called Recycle 2. Participants joined the Raven Hill staff to learn how plastics and metals are separated for recycling and how paper is made, then joined our staff to investigate decomposing logs and discuss how humans aren't the only creatures to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Nearly 800 students participated in the Recycle 2 program which was offered free of charge due to a generous grant provided by the Coleman Foundation. Theme-based discovery boxes made their way into more than 35 classrooms this fall, and many people enjoyed Community Field Trips to watch birds, call owls, and connect with nature. All in all, more than 2,800 students, parents and other community members enjoyed programs provided by the Little Traverse Conservancy in September, October, and November.

From the field

RECENT STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

This fall, a house was removed from the Rufus Teesdale/Horton Creek Preserve. The house was sold with proceeds planned for further land protection in that region.



Stewardship assistant James Dawley gets help from a volunteer as they stake posts at the Round Island Point Preserve to mark the new trail.



THE ANNUAL WORK OF MONITORING



This past fall, stewardship staff focused both ground and aerial monitoring efforts in Emmet, Mackinac, and Chippewa counties.

A total of 50 properties were monitored on the ground and 20 properties were monitored aerially for a total of 70 projects and 3,221 acres.

Mark and Ruth Paddock's 80-acre conservation easement near Douglas Lake was one of the properties monitored by air this fall.

BOARD PROFILE



Board Profile:
CONSERVANCY CHAIR
Dianne Litzenburger

“Our challenge is to assure that we advocate for open space, green forests, hidden away spots... just as vigilantly as those who press on to develop our land.”

How has your land ethic come about?

As one of six children, we spent our vacations camping in northern Michigan, the Upper Peninsula and visiting my Nana and Grandfather in Colorado. I have many wonderful memories of camping, hiking in the woods, and cooking meals over an open fire.

In my later high school and early college years, I didn't follow my friends and spend spring break on the beaches of Florida. Instead, my best friend, Katie, and I would head up to Canada to canoe lakes and streams and camp out under the stars, or we'd take off for weeks to backpack and hike the Appalachian Trail in upper state New York.

When I moved to northern Michigan after college, I was fortunate to meet my future husband, Boo Litzenburger, who took me on wilderness canoeing adventures and further exposed me to the beauty of northern Michigan, in particular Little Traverse Conservancy properties.

Little Traverse Conservancy prides itself on seeking balance between development and preservation. How does this fit into your land ethic?

Tourism and development of certain properties brings people to our wonderful part of this earth who also appreciate open space and the environment, many of whom support the Little Traverse Conservancy.

I believe in balance in all aspects of life. Our challenge is to assure that we advocate for open space, green forests, hidden away spots where one can escape to, and clean streams to paddle on and fish - just as vigilantly as those who press on to develop our land.

What are you most proud of about the Conservancy?

I'm most proud of the commitment, hard work, vision, and perseverance that go into protecting northern Michigan's beauty. I'm in awe at the generosity of individuals and families who donate their property, or place conservation easements on their acreage, so that it can be enjoyed by generations to come.

I admire those who donate in so many ways - money, their time as volunteer board members, stewards, and envelope stuffers - so this nonprofit organization can continue to work its quiet, non-confrontational magic to keep our natural world intact for all to experience.

Every time I drive by a Conservancy sign, I say a bit of thanks to the family who had the foresight to share the love of their land with others, to those who support the Conservancy in so many ways, and to the staff who pull it all together.

What do you see as some of the Conservancy's current challenges?

The ever-increasing cost of acquiring property is a challenge. And as the Conservancy continues to grow and acquire more and more property, the importance of proper stewardship planning and resources increases.

On a positive side, the Conservancy has taken great strides through its environmental educational programs and Young Naturalists Club to bring up the next "frontier" of environmentalists. It's exciting to know that we have another generation of young people dedicated to continuing the good work and hopefully they'll become Conservancy.



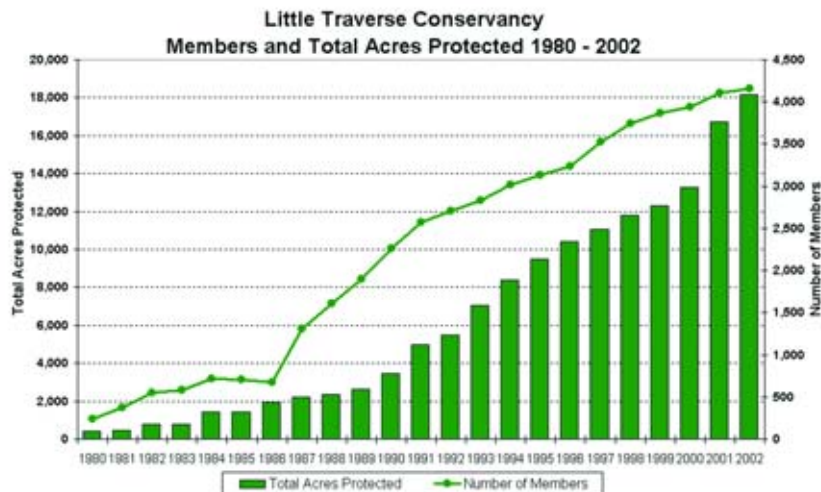
Membership and Land Protection: A Direct Correlation

Over the past 22 years, there has been a direct and visible correlation between membership support of the Conservancy and the amount of land protected, as shown on the graph to the right.

The turning point for membership was 1987, when the number of members doubled from 675 in 1986 to 1,309 the following year. Over the next 15 years there was a steady increase in both acres and members. Total members were 4,160 at the end of 2002, and total land protected surpassed 20,000 acres this past summer.

An important component of the Conservancy's success is that its primary mission remains the same as it was 31 years ago: to protect the scenic and natural character of the North for today and for the generations to come. We are grateful to all of our members and supporters for sharing that vision, advancing Conservancy programs, and helping us grow into one of the premiere land trusts in the nation.

If you have already renewed your support or joined as



new members this year, we thank you. If not, we thank you for your past support and we encourage you to continue investing in the future of northern Michigan by supporting the Conservancy this year. Your donation will be well invested. 🌿

We would like to welcome the following new members who joined our organization during the period of September 1, 2003 to November 30, 2003

New Business and Professional Members

Bradford's Master Dry Cleaners

New Individual and Family Members

FRIENDS AND BENEFACTORS

The following are new Friends or Benefactors, or previous members who have moved up to these categories in their annual giving.

Chris and Barb Ammann
Ms. Lindsey VanCleaf Beardslee
Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Beck
Dr. C. Patrick Carroll
Mr. and Mrs. Clay Cprek
Mr. and Mrs. Harrington M. Cummings
Gus and Nancy Hillenbrand
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kirsch
Mr. Chris A. Lawson
Craig and Mary Rapin
Paul and Marcia Woodruff

NEW GENERAL MEMBERS

Currie and Jane Andrews
Mark and Linda Babich
Norm and Kathy Bennett
Curtis S. and Kathryn L. Bosket
Dr. Beverly K. Brandt
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Cardy

Gordon and Susan Coffin
Randy and Traci Darrow
Steven and Naomi Dewinter
Jim and Julie DeWitt
Susan Cope Ekstrom
Mr. and Mrs. Elton D. Engel
Daniel and Sally Eustice
Jim and Lynn Evans
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Anthony and Patricia Marino

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Hendrik and Liesel Meijer
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Mr. and Mrs. Douglas A. Whitcomb
Ms. Elisabeth A. Wiethorn
Dr. and Mrs. Ian D. Wilson

Reflections

... Thomas C. Bailey



Simple Kindness

It is often said in the land conservation business - as it is in many other businesses - that one must take an “aggressive approach” in order to succeed. After all, it’s a dog-eat-dog world out there, and nice guys finish last. “Things move fast and there’s no time for pleasantries.” “Time is money, and if you want your piece of the pie, you’d better get out there and grab it before someone else takes it from you.” “There are winners and losers out there, and if you don’t get out there and beat the others, you’re a loser.”

Well. I must say, I don’t agree.

My dictionary defines *aggressive* as “apt to make attacks, showing aggression,” and *aggression* as “the act of making an unprovoked attack; a hostile action; hostile behavior.”

I don’t think there is a place for aggression in what we do and I don’t think that an aggressive mindset belongs in our movement. Land protection is about balance. It is about harmony and rhythm and the natural order of things. Instead of the win-lose model that typifies the aggressive mindset, I believe that we should take a more enlightened approach and think win-win. Even if we are being self-serving, we need to realize that an altruistic, win-win approach will get us more and get us farther than reverting to hostility and trying to make losers out of some people.

I believe we need to make winners of everyone. We should approach our work with clarity and compassion, and a genuine interest in making the world a better place. Should we be powerful? Yes. Quick when we need to be? Certainly. Smart? Of course. Assertive? Absolutely. But aggressive? No. If we cling to the aggressive mindset, we will not only make losers out of some of the people we deal with, we will make losers out of ourselves.

Instead, I suggest that we consider kindness: kindness to the people with

whom we deal, kindness toward the earth and kindness toward ourselves.

Kindness may not seem like much of a powerful force at first, but when you get down to it, it’s everything. Kindness is what can change the world - has changed the world in many ways. If you add up all of what the great spiritual leaders and other wise teachers of the world have tried to say to humanity, you could sum 98 percent of it up by saying “be kind.”

Kindness brings light into the world and into people’s souls. Kindness conveys blessings and benefits to all it touches. Kindness enriches both those who give it and those who receive it. Kindness is just another word for the love that all of those wonderful spiritual traditions say that we need to show to one another. It is like the single candle flame that lights up the entire cathedral.

Kindness is also like the “weak force” in the universe. Physicists concentrated their work for years on the “stronger” forces in the universe - like nuclear energy - which they thought held the key to the function of things, as opposed to weaker forces like electromagnetism and, weakest of all, gravity. But a funny thing happened that has implications not only for physics but also for philosophy and for the human spirit: they discovered that the weakest force can also be the strongest.

Most of us have heard about black holes. And we’ve read that a black hole is a huge concentration of matter that has been gathered up by gravity (the “weakest” force in the universe) and has become so dense that its mass and gravity overpower all the other “stronger” forces in the universe. Throw a couple of stars into a black hole and all that nuclear energy is overpowered; not even light can escape. Could it be this is a parallel to the things that poets, saints, sages, and philosophers have been saying for ages, that “the weakest shall be the strongest and the strongest shall be weak?”

Kindness. Kindness to the people with

whom we deal, kindness toward the earth, and kindness toward ourselves.

Kindness to those with whom we deal means looking for the win-win in everything we do. It means treating everyone - including our critics - with courtesy, compassion, and respect.

Kindness to the earth means protecting the integrity of the natural systems that comprise the earth. Both the animate and inanimate worlds deserve protection. By being kind to the earth, we will also be kind to ourselves because we will protect not only the physical integrity of our earth-home, we will protect its beauty, its diversity and its functions.

There are more ways to be kind to ourselves. For many of us in the land conservation movement, being kind to ourselves means dealing with burnout and balance in one’s life. Our jobs can, at times, seem like one of those black holes I referred to earlier. The job can absorb everything we can give and still seem to demand more. But we have to observe appropriate limits.

I will never forget the executive director’s round table discussion I held at a Land Trust Alliance Rally in California. I brought up the issue of striking the balance between work life, home life, family life, personal life, spiritual life, and all the other “lives” we have to live. The response was staggering; one volunteered, “well, I’ve been divorced twice...” That brings home the importance of being kind to ourselves as well as others.

I will leave you to your own conclusions on matters of philosophy and metaphysics, but to me it is all quite clear. Simple kindness in the human spirit is like gravity in the universe - at first it seems like the weakest force of all, but the reality is it has more power than all the other forces put together. That, I believe, is how our little movement can not only transform the people with whom we work, it can also transform the world.

Winter Field Trips

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*Conservancy field trips are offered at no charge,
but pre-registration is required by calling (231) 347-0991.*

Saturday, January 31

12 noon - 2 pm

Location TBD

Snowshoeing for Beginners

Snowshoeing is quickly becoming one of the fastest growing winter activities nationwide. If you enjoy hiking in the summer, give snowshoeing a try this winter! It is easy to learn and is a perfect activity for families. Join us for a guided hike to learn more about snowshoeing as a hobby and how to read signs of nature in winter. The Conservancy can provide snowshoes for children 8 years and over and for most adults. Please let us know your snowshoe needs when you call to reserve your space.

Friday, February 6

7:30 - 9 pm

Goodhart Farms

Full Moon Snowshoe

When the sky is clear and the moon is full in winter the forest glows with fairytale stillness. Cross your fingers for clear skies this night as we explore the grounds of Goodhart Farms on snowshoe. Conservancy has snowshoes available for most, so please let us know of your needs when you call.

Saturday, February 28

12:00 noon - 2 pm

Round Island Point Nature Preserve

Basic Winter Ecology

Although many plants and animals migrate, hibernate, or become dormant for winter, there is



Robert de Jonge

still plenty of activity in the forest this time of year. Join Conservancy staff as we explore one of our newest preserves and learn more about how nature adapts to the colder months. The Conservancy has snowshoes to borrow if conditions require them.

Saturday, March 6

12:00 noon - 2 pm

Greenwood Sanctuary

Family Snowshoe or Hike

The Greenwood Sanctuary is privately owned and home to elk, porcupine, and a multitude of other wildlife. Join us as George Jury, owner of this magnificent property, opens his gates and invites us in to hike and explore. Conservancy staff will lead a guided hike through the property. Snowshoes are available through our office.

Little Traverse Conservancy, Inc.

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Harbor Springs, MI 49740

(231) 347-0991

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