

Thumb Land Conservancy News

2024 February 25

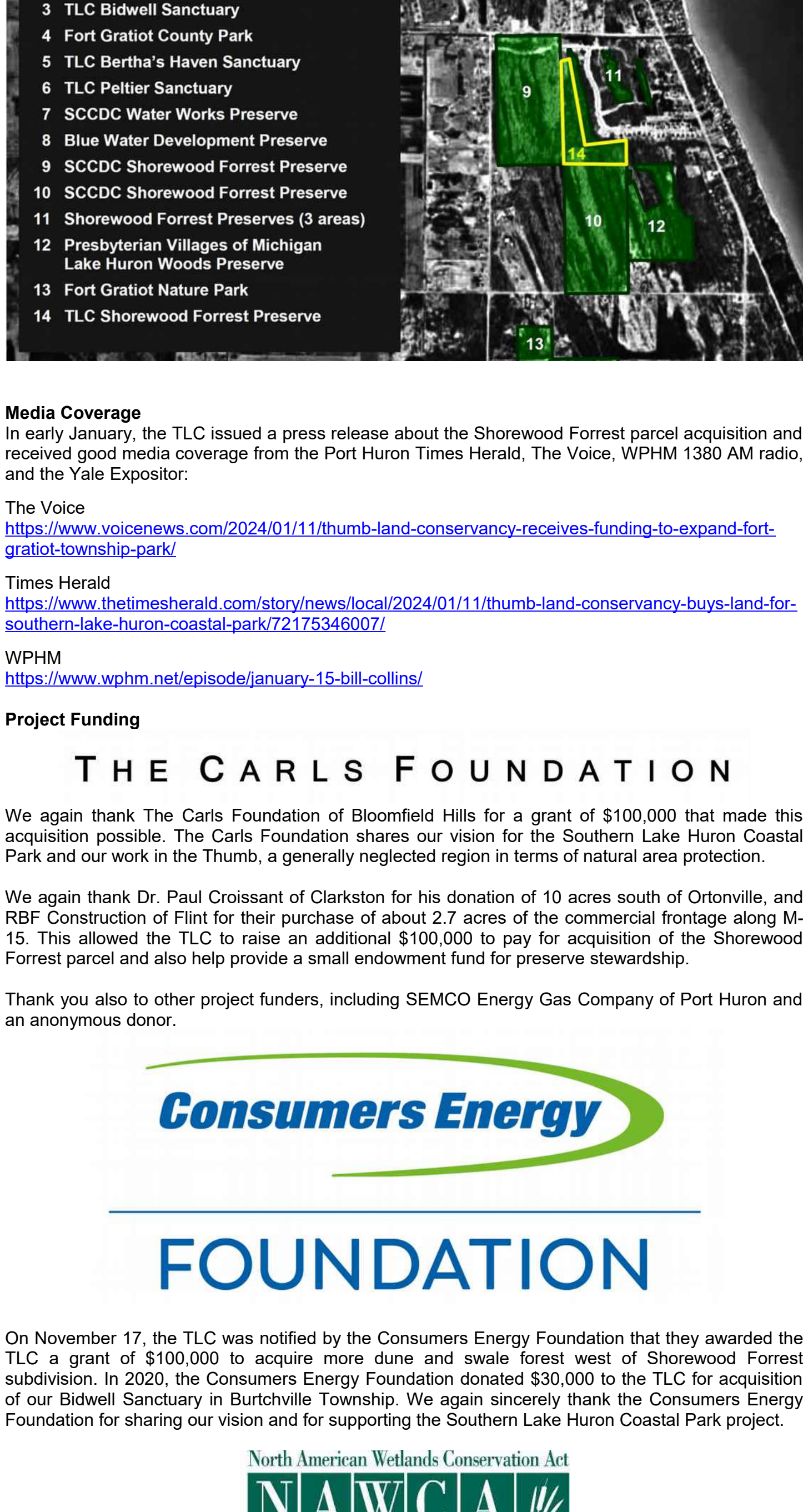
Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park Work Continues

Fort Gratiot Township, Saint Clair County

On November 15, the TLC acquired the latest land addition to the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park; a 27-acre parcel on the west side of Shorewood Forrest subdivision in Lake Huron. Since then, the TLC has worked to publicize the project, secure more funding for land acquisition, and coordinate park development and stewardship opportunities.

Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park

The Thumb Land Conservancy is acquiring key parcels needed to complete a 4.5-mile coastal park trail along Lake Huron, connecting Port Huron to Lakeport State Park. The Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park will protect most of the remaining forested dune and swale complex along the eastern Thumb shoreline; a unique landscape of parallel sand ridges and muck wetlands of very limited distribution along the Great Lakes. The TLC acquired the 11.5-acre Pettier Sanctuary in 2010, the 0.6-acre Bertha's Haven Sanctuary in 2019, the 42.1-acre Bidwell Sanctuary in 2020, and the new 27-acre Shorewood Forrest Sanctuary in 2023, outlined in yellow on the map below. The coastal trail has already been cleared through most of the preserves and will provide great public access when finished.



Media Coverage

In early January, the TLC issued a press release about the Shorewood Forrest parcel acquisition and received good media coverage from the Herald, The Voice, WPHM 1380 AM radio, and the Yale Expositor:

The Voice
<https://www.voiceneews.com/2024/01/11/thumb-land-conservancy-receives-funding-to-expand-fort-gratiot-township-park/>

Times Herald
<https://www.thetimesherald.com/story/news/local/2024/01/11/thumb-land-conservancy-buys-land-for-southern-lake-huron-coastal-park/72175346007/>

WPHM
<https://www.wphm.net/episode/january-15-bill-collins/>

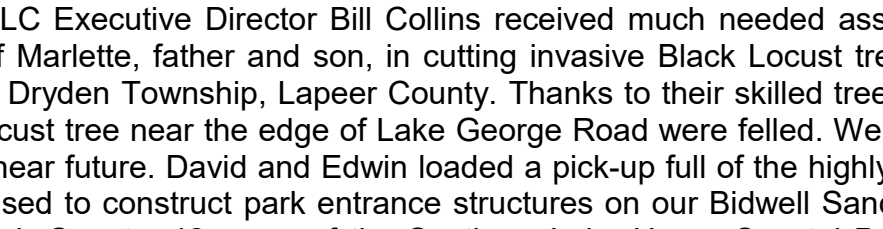
Project Funding

THE CARLS FOUNDATION

We again thank The Carls Foundation of Bloomfield Hills for a grant of \$100,000 that made this acquisition possible. The Carls Foundation shares our vision for the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park and our work in the Thumb, a generally neglected region in terms of natural area protection.

We again thank Dr. Paul Croissant of Clarkson for his donation of 10 acres south of Ortonville, and RBF Construction of Flint for their purchase of about 2.7 acres of the commercial frontage along M-15. This allowed the TLC to raise an additional \$100,000 to pay for acquisition of the Shorewood Forrest parcel and also help provide a small endowment fund for preserve stewardship.

Thank you also to other project funders, including SEMCO Energy Gas Company of Port Huron and an anonymous donor.



FOUNDATION

On November 17, the TLC was notified by the Consumers Energy Foundation that they awarded the TLC a grant of \$100,000 to acquire more dune and swale forest west of Shorewood Forrest subdivision. In 2020, the Consumers Energy Foundation donated \$30,000 to the TLC for acquisition of our Bidwell Sanctuary in Burtchville Township. We again sincerely thank the Consumers Energy Foundation for sharing our vision and for supporting the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park project.

North American Wetlands Conservation Act



In October of 2023, with the assistance of Ducks Unlimited, the TLC applied for a federal grant of \$250,000 through the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) to acquire and protect more of the dune and swale forest within the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park project area. If approved, the NAWCA grant will help fund preservation of an additional 88 acres west of Shorewood Forrest subdivision. We hope for good news this spring.

The 2023 Consumers Energy grant along with a possible NAWCA grant will allow us to complete our acquisition within the approximately half-mile wide by one-mile long Shorewood Forrest and Presbyterian Villages of Michigan tracts; one of the largest and relatively non-fragmented forest tracts remaining north of Port Huron.

Stewardship and Development

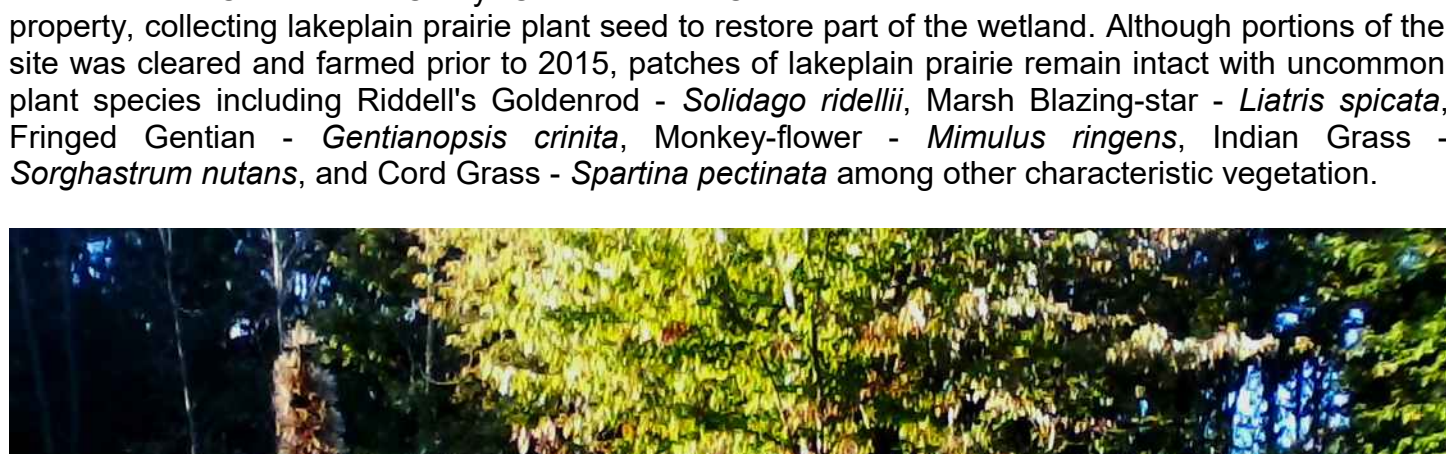


In 2023, the TLC was selected by Presbyterian Villages of Michigan to be the long-term steward of their 42-acre dune and swale forest preserve, adjacent to the east side of the Shorewood Forrest parcels. The TLC Executive Board approved, pending final State approvals and the establishment of a stewardship endowment fund. The 42 acres is to be preserved under a State conservation easement as mitigation for a small amount of wetland impact on phase 2 of their Lake Huron Woods Senior Living Community west of M-25 and north of Carrigan Road. TLC Executive Director Bill Collins worked as a wetland consultant for Presbyterian Villages on phase 2 of their Lake Huron Woods facility, assisting them in minimizing their impact and gaining approval from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy for the 42-acre preserve as mitigation. The State issued the wetland permit in December of 2022 and has since given preliminary approvals for other documents.



Wetland swale on the Presbyterian Villages Lake Huron Woods preserve on 2022 May 23. Photo by Bill Collins.

In early January, TLC Executive Director Bill Collins received much needed assistance from David and Edwin Miller of Marlette, father and son, in cutting invasive Black Locust trees on our Tranquil Ridge Sanctuary in Dryden Township, Lapeer County. Thanks to their skilled tree felling experience, all but one Black locust tree near the edge of Lake George Road were felled. We are planning to get the last one in the near future. David and Edwin loaded a pick-up full of the highly rot-resistant Black Locust logs to be used to construct park entrance structures on our Bidwell Sanctuary in Burtchville Township, Saint Clair County; 42 acres of the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park acquired by the TLC in 2020.



TLC Bidwell Sanctuary along the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park trail on February 14, 2024. Photo by Bill Collins.

Wetland Conservation Program Grant Application

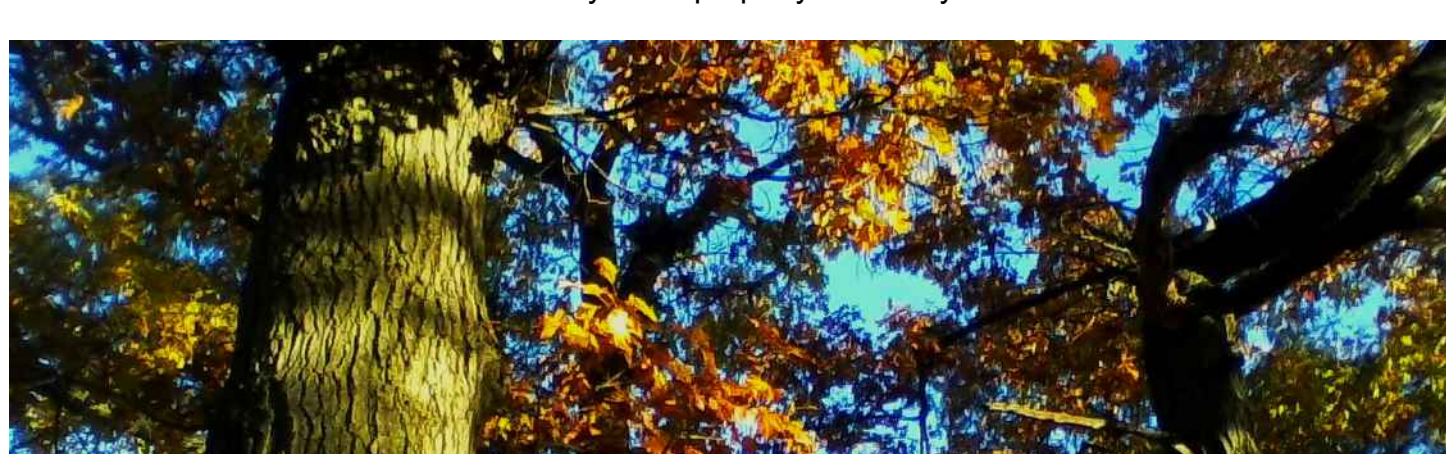
Morley Trust Lakeplain Prairie

Bangor Township, Bay County

In early January, new State funding was announced for the Wetland Conservation Program, an initiative to enhance, restore, or conserve wetlands to benefit water quality and wildlife and aquatic habitat, and to support and enhance Great Lakes tourism and related economic sectors in the watersheds of Saginaw Bay and Western Lake Erie. The project and funding process is being administered by Ducks Unlimited and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The TLC has worked with Ducks Unlimited for about 4 years on a few projects and was happy to be notified by them of this funding opportunity. Applications for the Wetland Conservation Program are due March 11 and we are currently seeking local partner organizations to acquire and protect about 100 acres of lakeplain wet-mesic prairie located on the north side of Bay City.



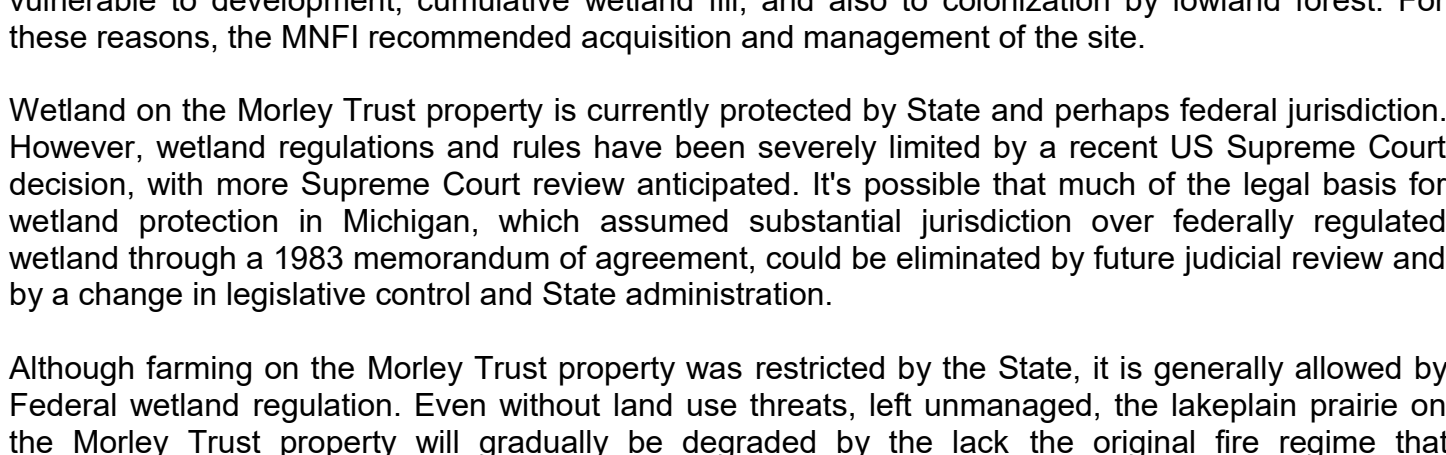
For a few years, the TLC has sought opportunities to protect the 113-acre Morley Trust property, located along the south side of the Kawakawin River and less than one-half mile southwest of the Saginaw Bay in Bangor Township, Bay County. The site is covered almost entirely by remnant and recovering lakeplain wet prairie interspersed with oak-dominated beach ridges. TLC Executive Director Bill Collins worked on this site in 2015 through 2018 as a wetland consultant for the landowner, TLC President Cheryl Collins and TLC Board Member Dan Rhein also worked on the property, collecting lakeplain prairie plant seed to restore part of the wetland. Although portions of the site was cleared and farmed prior to 2015, patches of lakeplain prairie remain intact with uncommon plant species including Riddell's Goldenrod - *Solidago ridellii*, Marsh Blazing-star - *Liatris spicata*, Fringed Gentian - *Gentianopsis crinita*, Monkey-flower - *Mimulus ringens*, Indian Grass - *Fringastrum nutans*, and Cord Grass - *Spartina pectinifera* among other characteristic vegetation.



Long seed spikes of Marsh Blazing-star on the Morley Trust property. Photo by Bill Collins.



Riddell's Goldenrod in-seed on the Morley Trust property. Photo by Bill Collins.



Large oaks covering the beach ridges on the Morley Trust property. Photo by Bill Collins.

The Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) ranks lakeplain wet-mesic prairie as critically imperiled in Michigan and especially vulnerable to extirpation. Its ranking is likely the same on a global basis with some uncertainty as to the number of occurrences. Part of the Morley Trust property was surveyed by the MNFI in 1995 and found to be a relatively good-quality prairie remnant but vulnerable to development, cumulative wetland fill, and also to colonization by lowland forest. For these reasons, the MNFI recommended acquisition and management of the site.

Wetland on the Morley Trust property is currently protected by State and perhaps federal jurisdiction. However, wetland regulations and rules have been severely limited by a recent US Supreme Court decision, with more Supreme Court review anticipated. It's possible that much of the legal basis for wetland protection in Michigan, which assumed substantial jurisdiction over federally regulated wetland through a 1983 memorandum of agreement, could be eliminated by future judicial review and by a change in legislative control and State administration.

Although farming on the Morley Trust property was restricted by the State, it is generally allowed by Federal wetland regulation. Even without land use threats, left unmanaged, the lakeplain prairie on the Morley Trust property will gradually be degraded by the lack the original fire regime that maintained these communities prior to Euro-American settlement. Eastern Cottonwood tree seedlings and saplings are already establishing across large parts of the site. Invasive weeds like Purple Loosestrife and Reed - *Phragmites australis* variety *australis*, are bound to increase and could very well dominate the site without management.

The Morley Trust property has a lot going for it in terms of potential public recreation. It is adjacent to Bangor Township park land to the north. A paved rail trail runs along the west side of the property which connects the Morley Trust property to Bay City State Park, less than one mile to the north. The northwest corner of the Morley Trust property nearly touches the Kawakawin River through a canal wide and deep enough to navigate small boats year-round, making a boat launch and water trail stop possible. The Morley Trust property is only one-half mile west of the 415-acre Bay City Ecological Restoration property preserved by Dow Chemical Company, to be managed by the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy. The Dow property is adjacent to developed public access on the Saginaw River. Although there is nearly a continuous public trail connection between the Morley Trust and Dow properties now, about a quarter-mile of that is on a road. A possible trail connection a Consumers Energy right-of-way could replace the road connection as a much safer alternative. The Morley Trust is also adjacent to other large parcels containing remnant lakeplain prairie which could be acquired in future projects to increase the total size and long-term sustainability of the plant community.



Within the Morley Trust property, nature trails with interpretive signs could be created, featuring the lakeplain prairie and oak-covered beach ridges. Interior paths could be suitable for other activities such as biking, cross-country skiing, and birding. Educational programs could be developed based on this imperiled ecosystem and these could be run cooperatively with other organizations on the Dow restoration of the lakeplain prairie and beach ridge plant communities. We believe a site like this could also support a small commercial operation to harvest lakeplain prairie seed for other restoration projects in the region. Surprisingly, there is also an old open-pit coal mine in the northeast corner of the Morley Trust property that could be a small historical attraction.

Other TLC Work

Huron, Sanilac, Saint Clair, and Lapeer Counties

As we have said before, the details of unfinished projects are best left until they are done. However, we can say that a few new preserves are somewhere between possible and very likely.

We were contacted in late 2023 about a potential land donation in Huron County exceeding 100 acres. There is also the possibility of establishing a large endowment fund to be used to acquire additional properties in Huron County.

In Sanilac County, we drafted a conservation easement for a nearly 50-acre property, a portion of which is covered by mature Sugar Maple and Red Oak forest. We are just waiting for the landowner to follow through.

In Saint Clair County, a landowner would like to place a conservation easement on about 60 acres of land along the Pine River. We will be able to complete our site inspections later in the growing season and should have the easement completed by late 2024.

In Lapeer County, a landowner wants to ensure that their 20 acres of restored prairie and oak savanna which they have done a lot of work on will remain protected after they are gone. With their attorney, the owner is taking the first step on a protection agreement with the TLC, after which, we will finalize a detailed protection agreement in the next year or so.

Conservation Easements

In addition to the satisfaction of protecting natural areas, there are potential tax benefits to placing a conservation easement on your land that you may want to consider.

1) According to Michigan Public Act 446 of 2006, the property tax on land under a conservation easement does not come uncapped or "pop up" upon sale or transfer to a new owner. This is not only good for the new owner, but may benefit the current owner by making their property more attractive to potential buyers.

2) The local tax assessor may decrease the property tax on land under a conservation easement. There is no guarantee and this is highly variable from one municipality to another.

3) An owner who places a conservation easement on their land may claim a charitable donation for the value of the easement on their federal income tax statement. The potential benefit depends on the appraised value of the easement and whether the owner takes an itemized deduction. If so, a non-farm landowner can deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income for up to 15 years, or until the value of the conservation easement has been fully deducted. Farmers can deduct 100% of the adjusted gross income for up to 15 years, or until the value of the conservation easement has been fully deducted.

As usual, we need to make clear that the TLC is not qualified to offer expert tax advice. Before making any conclusions, landowners are highly encouraged to consult with their own legal, financial, and tax advisors.

To answer some common questions about conservation easements: 1) Conservation easements do not give public access to private land, even though the legal agreement is called an "easement"; 2) Conservation easements do not give a conservancy ownership of the property; 3) Conservation easements do not restrict sale or other transfer of the land, but all future landowners must abide by the terms of the original easement; 4) Conservation easements do not need to cover an entire property; 5) Conservation easements are intended to protect land in perpetuity and can be removed only by a court order; 6) Conservation easements can be written to allow specific land uses and reasonable development of structures that are of minor impact that are compatible with the terms of the easement; 7) Land conservancies are required to inspect the conservation easement premises at least once per year; 8) Land conservancies are required to notify the landowner of violations of the terms of the conservation easement, require remediation of violations, and legally defend the easement in court if necessary; 9) The TLC requires some level of endowment funding to cover our annual inspection and reporting, and to potentially defend the easement in the future; and 10) Conservation easements can be placed on land under mortgage or other loan only if the lender agrees to subordinate their interest in the property to the conservation easement.

For more information about conservation easements, property donations, and other ways to protect land, contact the TLC.

The Dog Rose

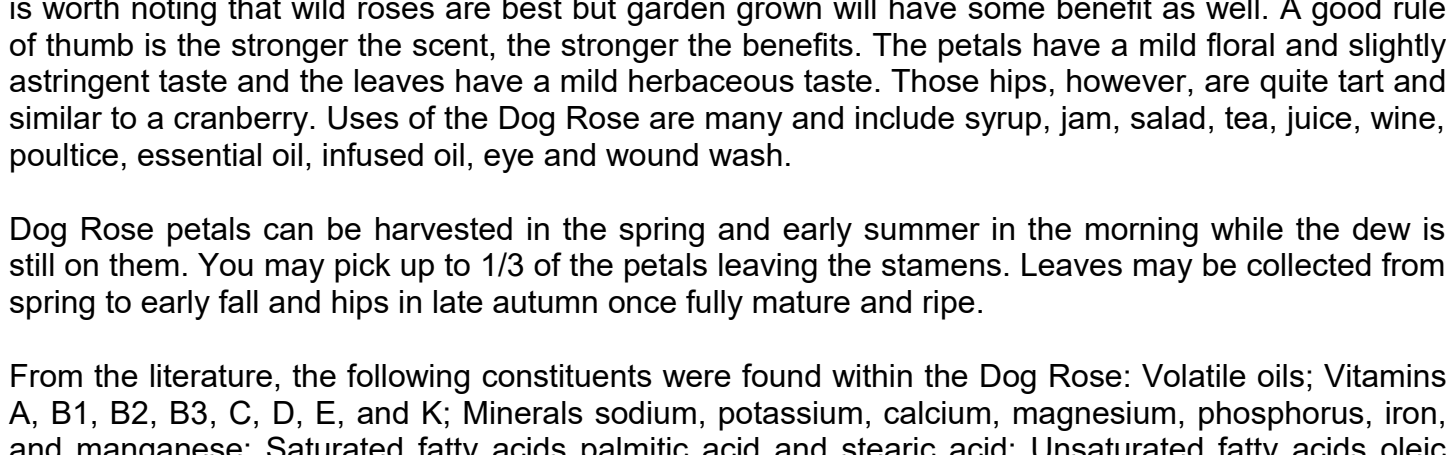
By Amy Martinez, RN, BSN

Amy's Relation To Creation and Botanicals, Marine City

What do you think of when you hear or read the word "rose"? Perhaps you can immediately recall the lovely smell and take a deep breath through your nose without even thinking about it. Do you feel the velvety softness of the petals or perhaps the prick from a pointy thorn? Are you amazed at the variety of colors you have seen roses in? Does your mind go to a romantic moment from the past or a dream of the future? Maybe an image of a loved one whose name is the same flashes before your mind's eye. I hope after reading to the end, you will be able to add to your thoughts when you encounter the word "rose".

It is hard to say how long roses have been around but we do know that in Greek mythology, the rose was a symbol of not only love, but also secrecy and silence. As a visual reminder of the need for confidentiality in certain areas, roses were often carved into ceilings, walls, and confessionals. In the Middle Ages, a rose was often hung from the ceiling where government meetings were being held to cue the need for secrecy. You may still hear the term *sub rosa* (under the rose) used today in some legal circles.

We also know that roses were used in ancient Egypt and throughout the world symbolizing nobility, wealth, love, romance, and health. Roses were used as far back as 3000 BC in Chinese medicine and made it into Dioscorides's book *Materia Medica* in the 1st century. Today, there is a plethora of scientific evidence supporting the use of roses in health and wellness. Many rose species provide medicinal and nutritional benefits. This article will give a general overview of the Dog Rose *Rosa canina*, a well-documented Eurasian species that has been used for centuries.



Dog Rose - *Rosa canina*. Photo credit unknown.

Rosa canina belongs to the Rosaceae family and can be located throughout North America where it has been planted or has spread in open areas that are low to middle elevation and may form dense thickets. It grows up to 10 feet tall and has solitary or small clusters of flowers that are white to pink with 5 petals up to 1 inch long each and many stamens. Leaves are compound and alternate with 5 to 9 toothed leaflets. Stems have curved thorns. The fruits are called hips and are orange to red in color, are pear shaped and are about 1/2 to 3/4 inch long which ripen from September to October.

The petals, leaves and hips have many uses including aesthetics, culinary, aromatic, and medicinal. It is worth noting that wild roses are best but garden grown will have some benefit as well. A good rule of thumb is the stronger the scent, the stronger the benefits. The petals have a mild floral and slightly astringent taste and the leaves have a mild herbaceous taste. Those hips, however, are quite tart and similar to a cranberry. Uses of the Dog Rose are many and include syrup, jam, salad, tea, juice, wine, poultice, essential oil, infused oil, eye and wound wash.

Dog Rose petals can be harvested in the spring and early summer in the morning while the dew is still on them. You may pick up to 1/3 of the petals leaving the stamens. Leaves may be collected from spring to early fall and hips in late autumn once fully mature and ripe.

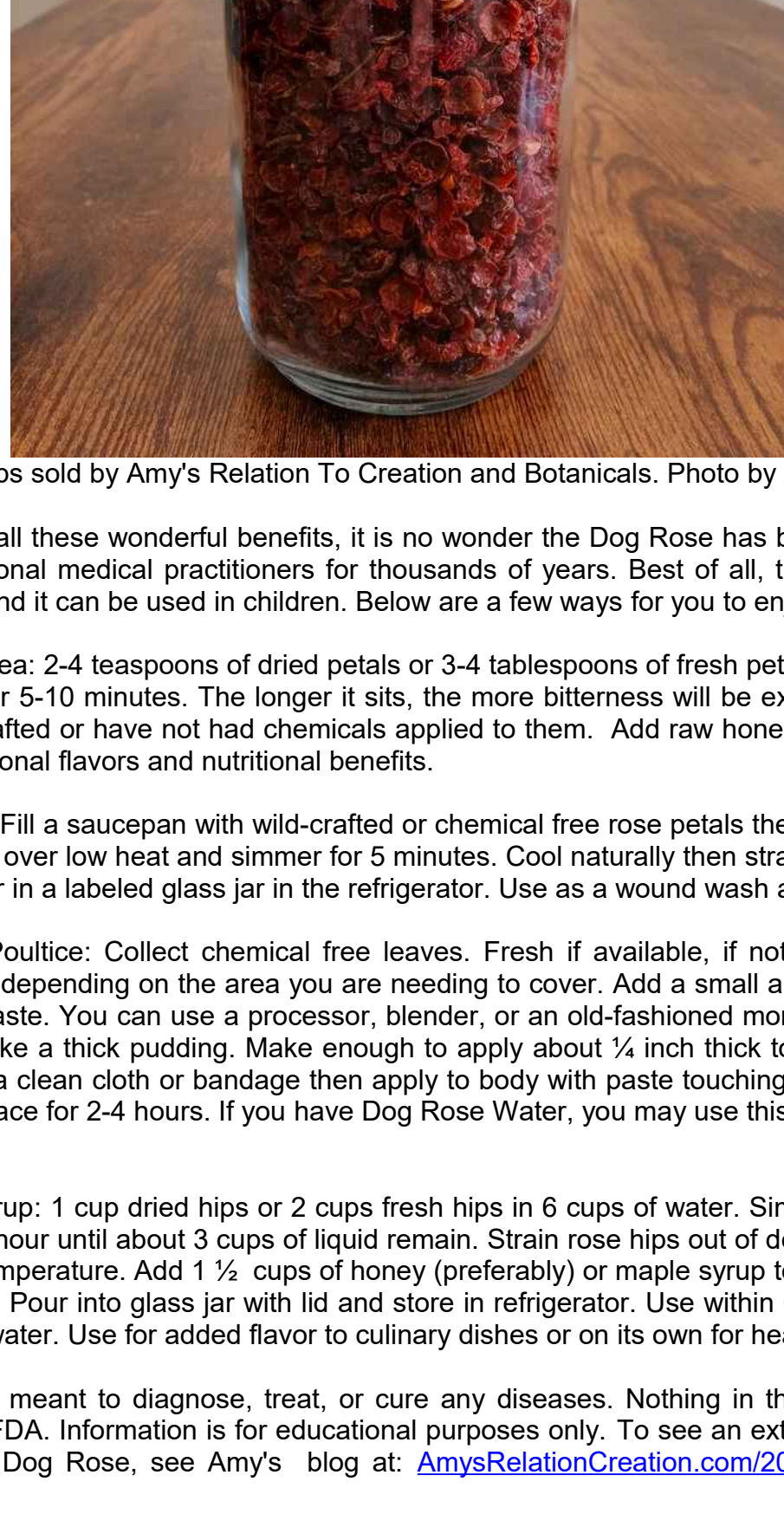
From the literature, the following constituents were found within the Dog Rose: Volatile oils; Vitamins A, B1, B2, B3, C, D, E, and K; Minerals sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, iron, and manganese; Saturated fatty acids palmitic acid and stearic acid; Unsaturated fatty acids oleic acid, linoleic acid, alpha linolenic acid, and arachidonic acid; Amino acids; Carbohydrates galactolipids, oligosaccharides, and pectins; Organic (plant) acids; Phenylpropanoids phenolic acid vanillin, polyphenol tannins, and flavonoids kaempferol, trans-tiliroside and anthocyanins; Terpenoid carotenes.

What does all of that even mean? Those constituents listed above are what make the Dog Rose such an amazing plant for our consumption! The constituents translate into the following effects in our body:

- Antiseptic, antiviral, and antibacterial properties that support the immune system and help in a quick recovery from bronchial infections, colds and flu. H. pylori, uterine and eye infections;
- The cooling properties of the Dog Rose act as a fever reducer;
- Nerve, sedative and neuroprotective properties help with bronchial spasms of asthma and coughs, menstrual cramping, sleep, soothing and calming the nervous system;
- Antinociceptive (pain blocking) properties help to ease pain associated with PMS, low back pain, and sciatic pain;
- Cardioprotective properties support the heart, promote blood circulation, and decrease swelling in capillaries;
- Digestive, colagogue (promotes the flow of bile into the intestine), choleric (promotes bile secretion) and anti-diarrhea properties help the body to eliminate toxins, aid in digestion and ease diarrhea;
- Hepatoprotective properties support the liver and gall bladder;
- Diuretic and nephroprotective properties help to eliminate excess fluid, and support the kidneys;
- Vulnerary (wound healing) and astringent properties assist in wounds, bruises, incisions, skin rashes, eye irritation, soothing and toning skin for lax tissue, burns, mouth ulcers and chapped hands;

- Antidiabetic properties increase functioning of beta cells in the pancreas to lower blood glucose levels in diabetics;
- Anti-obesity properties aid in maintaining a healthy weight;
- Anti-inflammatory properties help ease pain related to muscular aches osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and low back pain;
- Anti-oxidant and anti-cancer properties assist in prevention and treatment of cancer;
- Dog Rose properties also help with regulating menstrual cycles, ovarian cysts, antiaging and depression.

It is also interesting to note that Dog Rose extract is being tested for use with lung and prostate cancer and Rose hip syrup is being tested for use in children with ADHD.



Dog Rose hips sold by Amy's Relation To Creation and Botanicals. Photo by Amy Martinez.

After discovering all these wonderful benefits, it is no wonder the Dog Rose has been a staple in the cabinets of traditional medical practitioners for thousands of years. Best of all, there are no known safety concerns and it can be used in children. Below are a few ways for you to enjoy Dog Rose.

Dog Rose Petal Tea: 2-4 teaspoons of dried petals or 3-4 tablespoons of fresh petals infused in 1 cup of boiling water for 5-10 minutes. The longer it sits, the more bitterness will be extracted. Make sure petals are wild-crafted or have not had chemicals applied to them. Add raw honey and or a squeeze of lemon for additional flavors and nutritional benefits.

Dog Rose Water: Fill a saucepan with wild-crafted or chemical free rose petals then cover with water. Bring to a simmer over low heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Cool naturally then strain out petals. Store rose infused water in a labeled glass jar in the refrigerator. Use as a wound wash as needed.

Dog Rose Leaf Poultice: Collect chemical free leaves. Fresh if available, if not dried will do. The amounts will vary depending on the area you are needing to cover. Add a small amount of water and blend to form a paste. You can use a processor, blender, or an old-fashioned mortar and pestle. The paste should be like a thick pudding. Make enough to apply about 1/4 inch thick to the affected area. Spread paste on a clean cloth or bandage then apply to body with paste touching skin and secure in place. Leave in place for 2-4 hours. If you have Dog Rose Water, you may use this as you are making your paste.

Dog Rose Hip Syrup: 1 cup dried hips or 2 cups fresh hips in 6 cups of water. Simmer uncovered on stove for about 1 hour until about 3 cups of liquid remain. Strain rose hips out of decoction after it has cooled to room temperature. Add 1 1/2 cups of honey (preferably) or maple syrup to decoction and stir until well blended. Pour into glass jar with lid and store in refrigerator. Use within 6 months. To make thicker, use less water. Use for added flavor to culinary dishes or on its own for health benefits.

This article is not meant to diagnose, treat, or cure any diseases. Nothing in this article has been approved by the FDA. Information is for educational purposes only. To see an extensive bibliography of references for Dog Rose, see Amy's blog at: [Amy's RelationCreation.com/2024/02/21/dog-rose-rosa-canina/](https://AmyRelationCreation.com/2024/02/21/dog-rose-rosa-canina/)

Amy's Relation To Creation and Botanicals is a family-owned and operated botanical store located at 256 South Water Street in Marine City. A variety of natural products are available including teas, coffees, utensils, dried herbs, live plants, herbal tinctures, essential oils, salves, and other medicinal, wellness, personal care, and cleaning products. Owner, Amy Martinez, is focused on offering locally-sourced, natural, unprocessed, and eco-friendly products. The store is open from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm Tuesday through Saturday, but open until 8 pm on Thursdays from April 4 through December. In addition to the store, Amy offers a meeting room available for rent for small groups, for health presentations, wellness consultations, tutoring for nursing students, and Bible studies. For more information or to reserve the meeting room, see: [Amy's RelationCreation.com](https://AmyRelationCreation.com) or call 810-335-4622.



Amy's Relation To Creation and Botanicals store front in Marine City. Photo by Amy Martinez.

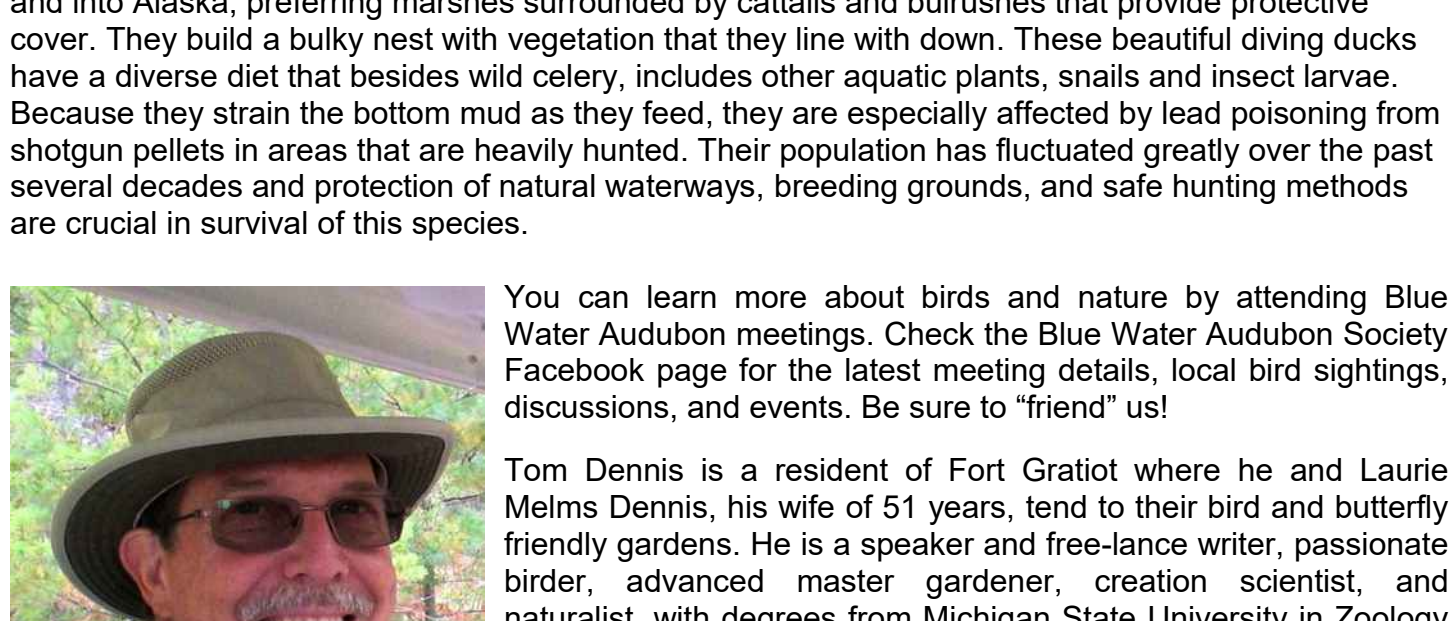
For a schedule of events see: <https://amysrelationcreation.com/upcoming-events/>. Upcoming events include:

- Every Sunday, 9 am - Bible Study
- February 28, 7 pm - Herbal Tea Blending, \$15
- March 6, 7 pm - Card Night, \$5
- March 13, 7 pm - How To Use Herbs, \$20
- March 20, 7 pm - Poetry and Tea, \$10
- March 24-31 - Holy Week, Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection, see site for times
- April 2, 8 pm - Light It Up Blue for Autism Awareness
- April 4 through December 31 - Open Late on Thursdays until 8 pm
- April 10, 7 pm - Tea Tasting, \$15
- April 20, 11 am - Puzzle Competition, \$5
- April 24, 7 pm - How to Wild Craft, \$15

Aristotle's Seabird

By Tom Dennis

Canvasback, *Aythya valisineria*



Canvasback ducks, male left, female right. Photo credit unknown.

The Canvasback, one of our largest diving ducks, is a common year-round local duck that is easily recognized if you know what to look for. It has some unique features, including what may seem to be a strange scientific name but read on to see why it's actually quite descriptive of the birds feeding behavior.

The genus name *Aythya* comes from Greek *aitiutha*, an unidentified seabird mentioned by authors that include Aristotle. The species epithet *valisineria* comes from the wild celery plant *Vallisneria spiralis americana*. This aquatic plant is abundant in the St. Clair River and its tributaries and the winter buds and rhizomes (specialized root form) are the Canvasbacks preferred food during the nonbreeding period. The presence of this plant is a key factor in them remaining in our area during cold weather when they would typically migrate further south. Historically, the majority of these birds would migrate to the Chesapeake Bay but with its recent loss of submerged aquatic vegetation their range has shifted.

The common name is descriptive of the adult male bird's back, sides and belly — having white with fine irregular lines resembling the weave of canvas. They can be quite easily distinguished from their genus cousin Redhead by the distinctive wedge-shaped head and bill on a long graceful neck. Their attire is completed with a chestnut red head and neck, black breast, rump, bill, and legs, and red eye. The female has the same distinctive head with dull gray to brown plumage.

Canvasbacks breed and nest in prairie potholes in north-central states, throughout western Canada and into Alaska, preferring marshes surrounded by cattails and bulrushes that provide protective cover. They build a bulky nest with vegetation that they line with down. These beautiful diving ducks have a diverse diet that besides wild celery, includes other aquatic plants, snails and insect larvae. Because they strain the bottom mud as they feed, they are especially affected by lead poisoning from shotgun pellets in areas that are heavily hunted. Their population has fluctuated greatly over the past several decades and protection of natural waterways, breeding grounds, and safe hunting methods are crucial in survival of this species.



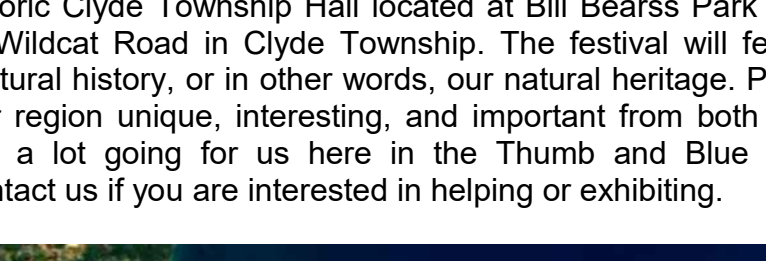
You can learn more about birds and nature by attending Blue Water Audubon meetings. Check the Blue Water Audubon Society Facebook page for the latest meeting details, local bird sightings, discussions, and events. Be sure to "friend" us!

Tom Dennis is a resident of Fort Gratiot where he and Laurie Melms Dennis, his wife of 51 years, live near their bird and butterfly friendly gardens. He is a speaker and free-lance writer, passionate birder, advanced master gardener, creation scientist, and naturalist, with degrees from Michigan State University in Zoology and Biology. Tom is an active member of Blue Water Audubon Society, Master Gardeners of St. Clair County, Port Huron Civic Theater, Ross Bible Church, Tapestry Garden Club, Blueways of St. Clair, and is a steward of the Blue Water Riverwalk with Friends of the St. Clair River.

You Got The Power In 2024

Save Nature Any Place! Sustain Native Animals & Plants!

In 2023, we highlighted restoration of natural habitat on private land, neighborhood efforts, and programs like Homegrown National Park, National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitat, and the TLC Naturehood registry. The TLC will continue promoting these efforts in 2024.



Restoration doesn't need to be complicated. In one way, it represents the truest expression of private land ownership and democratic ideals. As a landowner, you are vested with a great deal of power and responsibility. While the world is distracted by monetary value and appearance, there can be a benevolent and unpretentious aspect to owning land. You have the power to help restore nature, to support native species, to improve our air, water, soil, and climate, and to benefit all of humankind now and for generations to come, all right where you live. Every little piece of land matters now, whether it serves as habitat for native species year-round or is just a stop-over for transients. If you have a lot of land, you can have even more impact. Even if you don't own land but have a few flower pots or a small patch of dirt at your disposal, you will surely benefit a few of our beleaguered pollinators. Regardless, there is a lot to be said for adding a little beauty to our world.

Here we are in late February, feeling more like late April. This is a time when a lot of people start working in their yards again, or at least start thinking about it, cleaning up the garden, maybe tilling for the first time, ordering seeds, starting garden plants, a few planting early crops of radishes, peas, onions, or greens, cleaning up flower beds, buying plants, raking up left-over leaves; and some years even mowing the lawn for the first time. It's never too early, but now is a very good time to start planning restoration of native habitat on your property. For a basic guide on restoring or creating natural habitat on your property, see our 2023 March 19 TLC News: <http://www.thumbland.org/News031923-DrPaulCroissantLandDonation.pdf>

One of the best and easiest things you can do, or could have done, is simply leave the leaves. Leave the leaves and easily transform your yard into far more sustainable habitat for wildlife while saving yourself a lot of work, money, and also contributing less pollution and noise. Here are a few articles from the National Wildlife Federation on the importance of leaving the leaves, whether fall or spring:

- Seven Species That Need You To Leave The Leaves
<https://blog.nwf.org/2023/10/seven-species-that-need-you-to-leave-the-leaves/>
- Why You Should Leave the Leaves
<https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2015/Oct/Nov/Gardening/Leave-the-Leaves>

A Helping Hand for Early Bees
<https://www.nwf.org/en/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2017/Oct/Nov/Gardening/Plants-for-Early-Pollinators>

TLC Spring Stewardship

If you want to work on any of these projects, let us know.

Date	Activity	Location
March - May	park entrance and trail work	Bidwell Sanctuary
March - May	Black Locust removal	Croissant Sanctuary
March - May	entrance and trail work, prairie restoration	Loznak Sanctuary
March - May	invasive weed removal	Dead End Woods Sanctuary

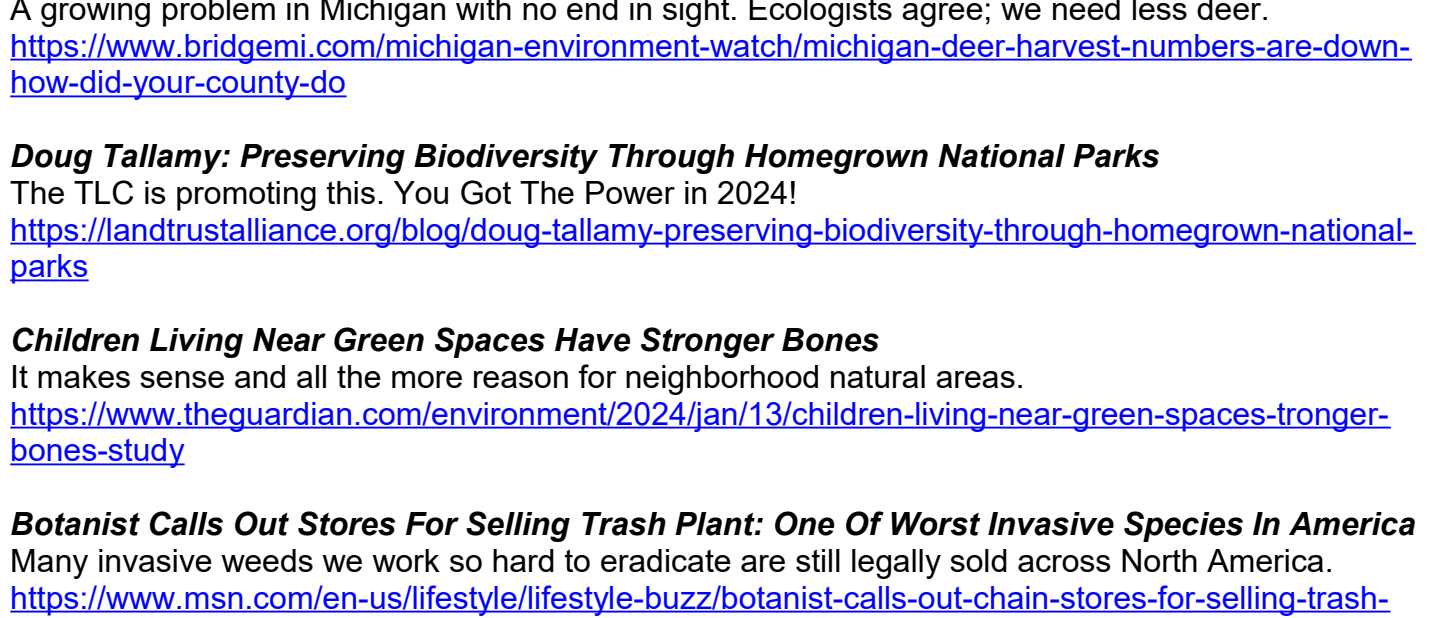
Clyde Historical Society

The Clyde Historical Society meets on the third Thursday of each month. The next meeting is March 21 at 6:30 pm at the Ruby Lions Club Hall located at 4535 Brott Road in Ruby. Before the meeting, the public is invited to join them for pulled pork sandwiches at 6:00 pm. The Clyde Historical Society promotes history education and preservation in Clyde Township. For more information, see the Clyde Historical Society Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1481890455361159/>

Thumb Heritage Festival

June 1, Historic Clyde Township Hall

The TLC and Clyde Historical Society will be holding the Thumb Heritage Festival on June 1 from 10 am to 4 pm at the historic Clyde Township Hall located at the Bill Bearrs Park across from the Dorsey House at M-136 and Highland Road in Clyde Township. The festival will feature exhibitions of our regional history and natural history, or in other words, our natural heritage. Participants are invited to share what makes our region unique, interesting, and important from both a historical and natural perspective. We have a lot going for us here in the Thumb and Blue Water Area with some fascinating stories. Contact us if you are interested in helping or exhibiting.



The Thumb and vicinity. Google Earth 2022 image.

Ecology Hips

If you have any ecologically oriented news articles you'd like to share, please e-mail them to us and they could be included in a future newsletter. There is so much news these days, most of it bad, that we have limited articles mostly to those specific to our region. The commentary here is solely the expression of TLC Executive Director Bill Collins.

Michigan's Lost Winter Cancels Sturgeon Season, Ski, Dog Sled Races
At what point does it get real?
<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-environment-watch/michigans-lost-winter-cancels-sturgeon-season-ski-dog-sled-races>

As Michigan Winters Vanish, Researchers Study Snow For Clues About What's Next
If this winter is any indication, it's not a great mystery.
<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-environment-watch/michigan-winters-vanish-researchers-study-snow-clues-about-whats-next>

Very Cool: Trees Stalling Effects Of Global Heating In Eastern US, Study Finds
We are fortunate here in Michigan. Even more reason to protect forests.
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/feb/17/us-east-trees-warming-hole-study-climate-crisis>

7,000+ Trees On Chopping Block For Trail Expansion In Sleeping Bear Dunes
Too many trails are designed like roads. Not only does this fragment the habitat but makes the forest much more vulnerable to edge species and invasive weed incursions.
<https://www.michiganpublic.org/environment-climate-change/7000-trees-chopping-block-trail-expansion-sleeping-bear-dunes>

To Avert Species Extinction, Researchers Plant Appalachian Trees In Western Massachusetts
This is needed on a huge scale to keep native forest plant species from being lost to global warming. Until a century or two ago, forest movement wasn't blocked by roads, development, and farmland.
<https://www.nepm.org/regional-news/2024-01-17/to-avert-species-extinction-western-mass-researchers-plant-appalachian-trees-in-franklin-county>

Humans Have Altered The Earth So Much That Migratory Animals Are Facing Extinction
So much of this has been observed for decades but the scale is just now being realized.
<https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/12/climate/migratory-species-extinction-report-climate/index.html>

Migratory Wildlife In Shocking Decline, UN Report Reveals
Another article on the decline of migratory species.
<https://www.dw.com/en/migratory-wildlife-in-shocking-decline-un-report-reveals/a-68229904>

Monarch Butterfly Numbers Dip To Second Lowest Level In Mexico Wintering Grounds
Providing summer habitat is important, but the winter habitat is critical.
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/feb/08/monarch-butterfly-population-numbers-decline-endangered-mexico>

Study Finds Great Lakes Influence Bird Migration Patterns
The Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park helps protect one pattern migration route.
<https://greatlakesecho.org/2023/01/11/study-finds-great-lakes-influence-bird-migration-patterns/>

Whitefish Are On Brink In Michigan. Can They Learn To Love Rivers To Survive?
Whitefish are important to Native Americans for centuries; in some of their oldest stories.
<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-environment-watch/whitefish-are-brink-michigan-can-they-learn-love-rivers-survive>

More Mussels: DNR Hires Specialized Biologist And Launches New Research Project
Michigan has needed an expanded mussel program for decades.
<https://www.michiganpublic.org/environment-climate-change/2024-01-20/more-mussels-dnr-hires-specialized-biologist-and-launches-new-research-project>

Hurricane Idalia Shows Nature May Provide The Best Shoreline Protection
People focus on controlling the top of the water, but forget about the bottom of the water.
<https://www.npr.org/2024/02/15/1227741074/nature-shoreline-protection-hurricane-season>

The Wildlife That Has Come Is Phenomenal: UK Farmers Holding Off Floods The Natural Way
Dear Drain Commissioners. We need this in Michigan!
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/jan/11/uk-farmers-holding-off-floods-the-natural-way>

Michigan Using Some ARPA Money To Conserve Wetlands To Reduce Cyanobacterial Blooms
The TLC is applying for funding. Thank you to Ducks Unlimited.
<https://www.michiganpublic.org/environment-climate-change/2024-01-15/michigan-using-some-arpa-money-to-convert-wetlands-to-help-reduce-cyanobacterial-blooms>

Money For Endangered Species Goes To Small Number Of Species, Leaving Others In Limbo
Protection needs to be more broad-based to benefit more species.
<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2024-01-02/la-na-most-money-for-endangered-species-goes-to-a-small-number-of-creatures-leaving-others-in-limbo>

I Discovered Way To Identify Millions Of Species After Lightbulb Moment In The Supermarket
Developed just over the water to our east in Guelph, Ontario. Maybe one day you'll be able to just point your cell phone and get an inventory of species.
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/feb/22/i-discovered-a-way-to-identify-millions-of-species-on-earth-using-dna-barcoding-aave>

Michigan Deer Harvest Numbers Are Down: How Did Your County Do?
A growing problem in Michigan with no end in sight. Ecologists agree; we need less deer.
<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-environment-watch/michigan-deer-harvest-numbers-are-down-how-did-your-county-do>

Doug Tallamy: Preserving Biodiversity Through Homegrown National Parks
The TLC is promoting this. You Got The Power in 2024!
<https://landtrustalliance.org/blog/doug-tallamy-preserving-biodiversity-through-homegrown-national-parks>

Children Living Near Green Spaces Have Stronger Bones
It makes sense and all the more reason for neighborhood natural areas.
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/jan/13/children-living-near-green-spaces-stronger-bones-study>

Botanist Calls Out Stores For Selling Trash Plant: One Of Worst Invasive Species In America
Many invasive weeds we work so hard to eradicate are still legally sold across North America.
<https://www.msn.com/en-us/lifestyle/lifestyle-buzz/botanist-calls-out-chain-stores-for-selling-trash-plant-this-is-one-of-the-worst-invasive-species-in-america/ar-AA1mUkAl>

The Fast-Growing Tree That Pollinators And Birds Can't Get Enough Of
Black Cherry trees sometimes get a bad rap, but in the right place, they are very beneficial.
<https://www.housedigest.com/1440507/plant-black-cherry-tree-attract-birds-yard-garden/#>

Invasive Earthworms Threaten Hardwood Forests In The Great Lakes Region
This is a much bigger problem than most would imagine.
<https://greatlakesecho.org/2023/10/25/invasive-earthworms-threaten-hardwood-forests-in-the-great-lakes-region/>

Why Birds Hit Windows - And How You Can Help Prevent It
A lot of articles lately about bird collisions as new studies reveal the scale of the problem.
<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/why-birds-hit-windows-and-how-you-can-help-prevent-it/>

Like Moths To A Flame? Here's What's Going On With Insects And Porch Lights
We can all do our part with our choice of lighting.
<https://www.npr.org/2024/01/30/1227172719/moths-to-a-flame-insects-fly-in-circles-around-artificial-light/#>

GoodSearch.com

You can support the TLC or another charity every time you search the internet by using GoodSearch.com. When you create an account and sign-in, GoodSearch donates about one cent per search to a charitable cause of your choice. The web site is a little confusing because it is part of GoodShop.com, which is another way to raise donations for a charity. To sign up for GoodSearch, do the following:

- Go to [GoodSearch.com](https://www.GoodSearch.com)
- At the upper right, click on "Sign Up".
- After signing-up, you should be directed to select a charity for donations.
- If you are not directed to charities, go to [GoodSearch.com/Causes](https://www.GoodSearch.com/Causes) to search for and select a charity by alphabetical order.
- The TLC is listed at [GoodShop.com/Nonprofit/Thumb-Land-Conservancy](https://www.GoodShop.com/Nonprofit/Thumb-Land-Conservancy).

You need to stay signed-in when you search the internet in order to raise funds for your selected charity. GoodSearch uses the Yahoo search engine. The TLC has collected over \$100 in donations from searches by our members. At about one cent per search, it's a slow way to raise funds, but it adds up and the TLC can use all the help we can get to protect land.

TLC Membership

With your membership, the TLC is better enabled to protect important natural areas in our region. We offer two membership levels: Individual and Family \$40, and Business \$200. Members will receive our e-mail news. Membership is also available in trade for volunteer help. You can also make donations in honor or memory of someone or something. For donations of \$100 or more, your name will be listed on our web site. For larger donations, please contact us for details. Make checks payable to "Thumb Land Conservancy". Mail checks and forms to: Thumb Land Conservancy, 4975 Maple Valley Road, Marlette, Michigan 48453. Make sure you provide us with your mailing address and e-mail address. Providing a phone number is optional but helpful. You can also make donations through the Square link on our web site at: [ThumbLand.org](https://www.ThumbLand.org)

