

# Thumb Land Conservancy News

## 2022 July 16

### Four County Community Foundation Grant Duthler Ridge Sanctuary Stewardship

The TLC received notice in May that it was approved for a grant of \$2,000 from the Four County Community Foundation to conduct stewardship on our new Duthler Ridge Sanctuary in Dryden Township, Lapeer County. This is the first grant we have received from the Four County Community Foundation, based in Almont, which serves portions of Saint Clair, Lapeer, Oakland, and Macomb Counties. The funds will pay for a preserve sign, marking of the property corners, clean-up, invasive weed removal, and other improvements. The TLC is planning on a few stewardship days in late summer and early fall on the Duthler Ridge Sanctuary during which representatives of the Four County Community Foundation will be present. Until then, we have coordinated with surveyor Rick Duthler on marking the parcel corners and we will have the preserve signs made.



Duthler Ridge Sanctuary in Dryden Township, Lapeer County.

The Four County Community Foundation began in 1953 as the Community Hospital Foundation, an initiative of Almont Doctor Gilbert Clare Bishop and local businessman, James D. Ligon to build a local hospital for the residents of northeast Oakland, northwest Macomb, southwest St. Clair, and southeast Lapeer Counties. Burley Hospital of Almont closed in 1927 and Dr. Bishop used his house as a hospital. In 1957, the Community Hospital was constructed about 2 miles south of Almont along the east side of Van Dyke Road and officially opened in 1959. All but \$92,000 of the estimated \$715,000 facility cost was raised by the local community.

The hospital operated profitably for about 25 years. It was later purchased by Saint Joseph's Mercy Hospital for approximately \$2,500,000. The Community Hospital board agreed that proceeds of the sale should continue to benefit the community and so created the Four County Community Foundation. Since its beginning in 1987, the original endowment from the hospital sale has increased to more than \$20 million. In 35 years, the Foundation has invested \$10 million back into the community through grants and scholarships and over 145 funds have been created to support various charitable purposes. More information about the Four County Community Foundation is available on their web site at: <https://www.4ccf.org/>



The historic Currier Octagon House in Almont, home of the four County Community Foundation.

## **Bioregion Reparation Fund Grant Bidwell Sanctuary Information Kiosk Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park**

In April of this year, the TLC was awarded a grant for \$4,500 from the Bioregion Reparation Fund, a donor-advised fund established by the Full Circle EcoHouse of Prayer of Port Huron and administered by the Community Foundation of Saint Clair County. Sister Veronica Blake and Sister Concepción González, who are well-known members of the Blue Water area environmental community, initiated the Bioregion Reparation Fund in 2018 in order to carry on their legacy of ecological education, spirituality, and restoration in the bioregion defined by Lake Huron, the Saint Clair River and the Black River watersheds.

The Bioregion Reparation Fund grant will be used by the TLC to construct an informational kiosk at the entrance of our Bidwell Sanctuary in Burtchville Township as part of the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park. The kiosk will provide information about the ancient beach ridge (or dune) and swale ecosystem along Lake Huron, the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park, project supporters, and the TLC.

On May 17, the TLC board met with Sister Concepción González, Sister Veronica Blake, and Kate Kenney of the Full Circle EcoHouse of Prayer on the Bidwell Sanctuary to officially accept the grant and take a walk on the new coastal park trail. We all had a good time and the Sisters were impressed with the new trail.



Left to right: TLC board members Kay Cumbow, Fred Fuller, and Cheryl Collins, Sister Veronica Blake, Kate Kenney, and Sister Concepción González of Full Circle EcoHouse of Prayer. Also in attendance were TLC board member Dan Rhein and TLC Executive Director Bill Collins.

We still don't have a design for the kiosk, but we'll be getting to it soon. It will be wooden and a basically roundish structure built of cedar posts with panels to post information about the Bidwell Sanctuary, coastal trail, and ridge and swale complex. If anyone has possible materials and is interested in helping build it, there is funding available.

The Bioregion Reparation Fund is a "donor-advised fund" administered by the Community Foundation of Saint Clair County, with grants awarded based on recommendations from an advisory committee consisting of Sister Concepcion, Sister Veronica, and five other members from the Blue Water area. More information about the Bioregion Reparation Fund and the work of Full Circle EcoHouse of Prayer can be found at: <http://fullcircleretreat.org/bioregion-reparation-fund/>. Donations to the fund can be made online at: <https://www.stclairfoundation.org/fund/bioregion-reparation-fund> or by sending a check to: Community Foundation of Saint Clair County (CFSCC), 500 Water Street, Port Huron, Michigan 48060. Write "Bioregion Reparation Fund" in the memo line. Add the word "spendable" if you wish your gift to be available immediately for current projects.

## **Blake Short**

### **New TLC Program Assistant**

In May, the TLC began working with a new Program Assistant, Blake Short, of Port Huron. Blake has helped us clear the new coastal park trail on the Bidwell Sanctuary, pull Garlic Mustard at the Dead End Woods Sanctuary, and burn barberry at the Deerfield Preserve in Huron County. As we move forward, Blake will assist us in a variety of capacities.

Blake, 36, grew up in the Lakeport area, actually right across from our Bidwell Sanctuary where he wandered as a kid. With family roots in West Virginia, he returned there in his early 20's, which got him very connected with the natural world. He returned to Michigan and attended Ferris State University where he earned a BS (Blake Short) degree in Environmental Biology. While at Ferris State, he was Vice President and Project Manager of the Mycology Club, culturing various fungi, leading field trips, and collecting mushrooms in the nearby Manistee National Forest. Back in Port Huron, he was a summer intern with the Friends of the Saint Clair River, working on science communications and stewardship. He was employed full-time growing gourmet mushrooms for a supplier in Chesterfield Township in Macomb County, but now working for Huron Ecologic as a wetland consultant. In his spare time, Blake does a lot of mushroom collecting, especially in the Port Huron State Game Area. He grew up sailing and still takes a small boat out on Lake Huron. He is also a musician, playing guitar and mandolin, particularly Americana and Blue Grass.



Blake looking at wetland plants along Whiskey Harbor, north of Port Hope, on June 30 during a Huron Ecologic wetland job. The MNA Kernan Memorial Sanctuary is in the background.

## **Dead End Woods Sanctuary**

### **Spring Stewardship**

Again this spring, we saw a significant reduction of invasive Garlic Mustard cover in the Dead End Woods Sanctuary in Fort Gratiot. Our focus for the past 13 years has been removal of Garlic Mustard across the south side of the preserve while gradually shifting our work area to the east. This spring however, even the most concentrated patches of Garlic Mustard to the east, possibly where the

invasion started, were all but gone with mostly one-year seedlings established from the seed bank. The reduction in the eastern patches appears to be largely because the whole area was burned in 2020 using propane weed torches. This not only killed most of the seedlings, but apparently much of the seed bank.

By the third stewardship day this May, our workers moved to the north side of the preserve where we have done very little removal previously. As expected, there were very few Garlic Mustard plants on the north side of the woods because of less sunlight exposure than the south side. So, everyone shifted to removing minor occurrences of Multiflora Rose and Japanese Barberry, and removing old junk dumped by adjacent owners along the property lines.

On May 28 we had two special surprise volunteers - Cindy Holzer from Genesee County and Tracy Wacker from Lapeer County, both biology teachers at University of Michigan Flint, Tracy having just retired, and both friends of TLC Executive Director, Bill Collins. They drove a long way just to pull weeds in our little woods. For many years, Cindy worked as a wetland consultant across southeast Michigan and partnered on a few projects with Bill. Cindy was one of the few consultants that would not try to excessively under-delineate wetland boundaries in order to deregulate them "on paper". Tracy was co-leader of a hard-working, creative, and fun-loving enclave of graduate students that occupied a lab in the Plant Biology Building at Michigan State University in the mid-1980's when Bill attended. They helped him survive an often dreary undergraduate experience for which he is ever grateful. Tracy did ground-breaking work on mycorrhizal associations that improved asparagus crops. It was great to see Tracy and Cindy after so many years.

## Summer Stewardship

Details will be sent in future e-mails. If you want to work on your own on any of these, let us know.

Date	Activity	Location
July - September	Japanese Barberry removal	Deerfield Preserve
July - September	trail and park entrance work	Bidwell Sanctuary
July - September	clean-up and restoration	North Street Station

### Deerfield Preserve Barberry Control

We worked on the Deerfield Wind Energy Preserve in April, May, and June and will continue cutting and burning invasive Japanese Barberry and Multiflora Rose through the summer. Because of our success along the preserve edge to the north, we started moving further south into barberry thicket that has largely not been cut or burned before. This south thicket is an approximately 40-foot wide area we call "The Wall" because of its density and height. But once we tear down "The Wall" there is very little barberry thicket remaining to the south and our control activities will then shift to scattered occurrences throughout the preserve where barberry is more limited by shade and wetter ground.

### Southern Lake Huron Coastal Trail

**Chëkhònèsink hìtkwike schind lèkuwake - Place among hemlock trees on sandy ground where there is sound of waves breaking – Lenape**

Work continues on the Bidwell Sanctuary. Lake Huron Lawns (LakeHuronLawns.com) has done a great job mowing the entrance. We are continuing the coastal trail through the north of the sanctuary.



View west of the east edge of the Deerfield Wind Energy Preserve showing our "scorched earth policy" at "The Wall". Burning the ground like this eliminates much of the barberry seed bank.



View north along the new Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park Trail under the Hemlock trees.

## Carolina Wren, *Thryothorus ludovicianus*

By Tom Dennis

We recently visited Marshall, Michigan for their annual home garden tour and had a wonderful reunion with long-time friends who now live in this city of beautiful homes and gardens. The area is a friendly habitat for flora and fauna with many deer and birds living in the downtown area. At one garden we heard the familiar and musical “teakettle-teakettle-teakettle” song of a Carolina Wren and I noted that I should write about this beautiful creature that can also be found in the Bluewater Area.



Carolina Wren

Carolina Wrens are much larger than our more common House Wrens. They weigh in at about 0.7 ounces (almost double the weight of House Wrens) with males slightly larger than females. They have rufous upperparts, buff underparts, a white throat and vivid white eyebrow. The wings and tail are dark-banded with flecks of white and they have a long, curved bill and pink legs. Males and females can't be distinguished through their coloration. The nest is made of twigs lined with leaves, moss or other fine materials brought to the nest site by the male while the female completes the construction. It is an arch shaped structure with a side opening and is built in a rocky crevice, tree cavity or occasionally in unorthodox places in and around buildings. Females incubate the eggs and both sexes handle feeding and defense of the nest.

These wrens are common throughout the southeastern states and into southern Ontario and they extend their range north as far as Maine during mild winters. The Bluewater Area is on the northern edge of their summer range and they are common here in winter. They are not considered to be migratory and are heard more often than seen as they are quite loud but like many wrens prefer the safety of dense trees and shrubs. Carolina Wrens are one of five species of wren common to our area. Their preferred habitats include woodlands with tangled undergrowth, brushy edges, overgrown farmlands and suburban yards with abundant thick shrubs. They are attracted to dilapidated buildings and unkempt yards and if you have this condition you may want to advise the neighbors that you are trying to attract Carolina Wrens.

The males are robust singers of the above mentioned song that is performed year round except in the harshest weather conditions. Although the “teakettle” sound is most typical, notes may be added or subtracted such as with the “cheery-cheery-cheery” version. They have a repertoire of over twenty song versions that are repeated from three to over twelve times. Their song can be confused locally with the “peto, peto, peto” call of the Tufted Titmouse and whistles of the Northern Cardinal. Unlike House Wrens, the females rarely sing.

The diet of Carolina Wrens is invertebrates including beetles, true bugs, grasshoppers, spiders, ants, bees, and wasps. They forage on or near the ground in tangles of vines or other vegetation and occasionally eat small frogs. Seeds and fruits make up a small percentage of the diet and they visit birdfeeders in the northern range areas such as in Michigan.

The lifespan for Carolina Wrens is typically five to seven years with the records from banded birds showing that about ten percent of adults live as long as ten to twelve years. You can attract Carolina Wrens to your yard by providing large areas of thickets, vines, and supplemental food sources including suet mixes (ideally with insects like meal worms if available) all within an insect friendly habitat.

If you wish to learn more about birds you are welcome to visit the local Audubon Facebook page at “Blue Water Audubon Society”. Please be sure to friend us.

Tom Dennis is a free-lance writer, passionate birder, zoologist, creation scientist, and naturalist.

## **Clyde Historical Society**

Our partner organization, the Clyde Historical Society, has several events planned for this summer and fall. All are open to the public. The next event is their Pie Social this Sunday, tomorrow:

**July 17 - Pie Social**, 1:00 to 4:00 PM, Clyde Historical Township Hall, no charge.

**August 14 - Memorial Brick Dedication**, 1:00 to 4:00 PM, Clyde Historical Township Hall, no charge.

**September 11 - Pulled Pork Family Dinner**, 1:00 to 4:00 PM, Clyde Historical Township Hall.

**October 16 - Kinney Cemetery Walk**, featuring prominent settlers, 1:00 to 4:00 PM, no charge.

For more information, see the Clyde Historical Society Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1481890455361159/>

## **People We Have Lost**

It hasn't been easy to keep up in 2021 and 2022, but as promised in our April newsletter, following is more information about some of the people we have lost. For every person written about here, we fear that there might be as many gone that we have not heard from lately.

### **Donna Jurovcik**

TLC member and donor, Donna Jurovcik, passed away on January 19, 2021. We met Donna through a friend on Facebook but never met in-person. Donna was a very out-going person featured in our 2020 March 9 newsletter. Donna was an artist, a writer, a musician, an animal lover, and a naturalist with a gift for keen observation and deep insight. She shared many sketches and paintings on Facebook of galloping horses, western landscapes, bucolic gardens, and family scenes, several of which are included in our 2020 March 9 newsletter. At other times, she shared photographs of birds, trees, flowers, or a toad, with long detailed comments ranging from whimsical notions to deep thoughts.

Donna lived in Detroit and Ferndale most of her life and was employed in a variety of administrative positions with large firms in the area. In one of our phone discussions, she shared fond memories of living and working in Detroit and her deep appreciation for the culture and history of the city. Donna was involved in the arts for many years in the Detroit area. She was an active member of the South Oakland Art Association of Royal Oak since 1974, serving on the board of directors, as president, and then an emeritus.

Like many people, Donna's natural artistic ability and lifelong enjoyment of artistic creation overlapped with a reverence for God's creation. Donna drew upon a deep sense of fascination and optimism that she wanted to share with the world. Even as she was dealing with cancer in her last year, Donna said her motto was to: *"Learn to accept and keep trying no matter what. Don't let one window closing keep you from not opening another. Every moment going forward is a new beginning."*

Here is a link to Donna's obituary:

<https://www.spauldingcurtin.com/obituaries/Donna-L.-Jurovcik>

## **Pam Haas**

TLC member Pam Haas passed away on June 15, 2021. Several of us in the TLC knew Pam, in part because she was the wife of Bob Haas, who participated in many of our stewardship days and excursions. Otherwise, Pam and Bob were very active together in the Blue Water Audubon Society and basically inseparable, as was recounted at Pam's memorial service at Fort Gratiot Lighthouse Park by TLC member and service minister, Tom Dennis.

As Pam and Bob lived next to the Port Huron State Game Area in Grant Township, they were both very concerned about anything that might impact this wonderful natural area of the Black River valley in Saint Clair County. On at least one occasion, Pam and Bob went door-to-door to speak with neighbors about possible expansion of gravel mining near the Game Area. When Silver Trails Scout Reservation went up for sale to a gravel company, Bob and Pam attended the meetings of the Friends of Silver Trails. Pam was quite vocal, asking a lot of questions and disgusted by the whole deal.

At Pam's memorial service, we heard a lot of funny stories, and also about her tasty recipes and all of her grand babies. It wasn't funny at the time, but Tom Dennis told us about how she got a fishing lure hooked through her ear on a kayak trip up north. Pam and Bob met while working at a YMCA summer camp, which seems very fitting. Not infrequently, Pam would relay phone discussions back and forth to Bob, who was either on his way in or out of the house to work on his butterfly and moth survey. Pam was always interested in the latest issues and prompted Bob to take action. Pam is missed.

Here is a link to Pam's obituary:

<https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/21445274/Pamela-Lynn-Haas>

## **Jim Hollenbeck**

Jim Hollenbeck passed away on September 30, 2021. Through his environmental firm, EH&S Services of Port Huron, Jim conducted a phase 1 environmental assessment for our Loznak Sanctuary in Marysville and made arrangements for us to properly dispose of waste oil found in an old drum on our Bidwell Sanctuary. TLC Executive Director, Bill Collins, worked with Jim at Testing Engineers and Consultants in Lansing back in 1989-90 where they conducted asbestos surveys, air monitoring, and various environmental investigations. Bill later worked with Jim on several projects involving wetland delineation and permitting across southeast Michigan. Almost every phone discussion between the two started with "Hey Boss" from Jim followed by "Yes Chief" from Bill.

Jim, Bill, and other co-workers shared an interest in geology, rocks, and minerals from their earliest years. Jim had an extensive rock and mineral collection that remains in the family. For kids not exactly into natural science, try introducing them to rocks, minerals, and fossils.

Like many of us Michigan "trolls" that live "under the bridge", Jim also loved the UP. He knew just about every place and every thing there was to see and do in the UP, having graduated from Michigan Technological University in Houghton and making regular pilgrimages above the Straits. Only about a month before Jim passed, Bill sat with him in his office discussing a book of UP destinations, among other things, and how he couldn't wait to get up there and explore again.

Here is a link to Jim's obituary:

<https://www.smithfamilyfuneralhome.com/memorials/james-hollenbeck/4742803/>

## **Janet Kruger**

Janet Kruger, former President of the Clyde Historical Society, passed away on November 18, 2021. Janet was a long-time friend of many of us in the TLC and she was very interested in protection of historical sites and natural areas. If not for her, the TLC would likely not have a conservation easement on the Bob Putze forest in Ruby. Janet was always a kind voice and loved a good laugh. We frequently ran into her at historical or environmental gatherings in Saint Clair County.

In the late 1950's and early 60's, Bertha Daubendiek, founder of the Michigan Nature Association, visited local schools to teach children about the importance of nature. One of those children inspired by Bertha was Janet, who later helped Bertha on some of her projects, and the two became friends. Years later, Janet moved to the north side of Mill Creek in Kenockee Township, not far down the road from Bertha.

Janet was one of the few in our community to step-up for the protection of historical sites. She was a founding member of the Clyde Historical Society and led much of the effort to move and restore the historic Clyde Township Hall, now located near the northeast corner of M-136 and Wildcat Road across from the Dorsey House, south of Bill Bearss Park. It pained Janet to see any historic structures lost and how it must have been when the original Dorsey House was demolished in the early 1990's. It was her desire to eventually acquire the old "Flour Mill" that now sets in Avoca and relocate it to or near its original site on Mill Creek at the bottom of Ruby Hill. Janet was absolutely delighted when the TLC acquired the historic North Street rail station, post office, and general store in 2016 and part of the reason that the TLC and Clyde Historical Society became partners.

Here is a link to Janet's obituary:

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/janet-kruger-obituary?id=31624686>

## **Robert Collins**

Robert "Bob" Collins, father of TLC Executive Director, Bill Collins, passed away on November 22, 2021. An extensive article about him is available in our April 7 newsletter.

Here is a link to Bob's obituary:

<https://pollockrandall.com/obituaries/15621>

## **Dr. Syed Latafat Husain Hamzavi**

Dr. Syed Latafat Husain Hamzavi passed away on January 15, 2022. He was the founder of Hamzavi Dermatology in Fort Gratiot with offices throughout the Detroit area. The TLC received our Peltier Beach ridge Sanctuary in Fort Gratiot due in part to the generosity of Dr. Hamzavi who preserved it as mitigation for wetland impact for his office expansion. Dr. Hamzavi was also a friend of TLC Executive Director Bill Collins.

Dr. Hamzavi was born in Aurungabad, India. He pursued his medical education at schools in India, Pakistan, and Scotland. He always recalled with fondness how the British dermatology community embraced him despite prevailing ethnic biases of the time. He and his wife moved to Detroit in 1977 where he helped to develop the Contact Dermatitis Unit at Wayne State University, also teaching there as a Professor of Dermatology. In 1981, he also started Hamzavi Dermatology in Port Huron, which grew to include several offices and partners across southeast Michigan.

Dr. Hamzavi was an avid Urdu poet and participated in numerous literary events. He was a man of deep religious conviction who believed in an inclusive world. He was generous to all and always sought to improve himself. For anyone that knew Dr. Hamzavi, his kindness, humor, and special attention clearly came through. The Port Huron area certainly lost a great man.

Here is a link to Dr. Hamzavi's obituary:

<https://www.thetimesherald.com/obituaries/pht046049>

## **Yvonne Walker**

Yvonne Walker, mother of TLC Board Member Chris Walker, passed away on June 5. Yvonne and her husband Don raised Chris and his brother Greg on a farm between Croswell and Lexington in Sanilac County. TLC Executive Director, Bill Collins, and Chris Walker first met while working on summer camp staff in 1978 teaching nature at Silver Trails Scout Reservation near Jeddo. They worked together again in 1979 and have remained friends since. Chris's brother Greg was Bill's Wilderness Survival merit badge instructor at Silver Trails in 1974 or 75.

In the early days, Bill would often join Chris at their family farm for some new adventure, whether exploring a woods, going on a nature photo shoot, building Blue Bird houses, bird watching, attending a Blue Water Audubon meeting, or driving the roads looking for anything of interest. The Walker farm felt like a little Rivendell in the country. Yvonne and Don Walker were always wonderful hosts with lots of stories, jokes, and good food. Anyone that knew Yvonne surely remembers her laugh and her voice as she told stories or set the record straight, a perfect accompaniment to Don's calm, deadpan delivery. The Walker's always had time for everyone and made them feel welcomed as a member of the family. Many friends visited the Walker farm over the years, all beneficiaries of Yvonne's hospitality and great cooking.

Yvonne and Don Walker inspired a fascination with nature in their sons and their friends. Bird watching was big with the Walker's and still is, whether out the window, in the yard, down at the pond, or way out in the wilds. Yvonne and Chris trained Black-capped Chickadees to take seed not only from their hands but from their lips. Yvonne also knew most of the common native plants of our region, and no doubt passed her knowledge on to her sons who passed it on to their students. How rare people like the Walker's are, that truly appreciate nature, take time to be in it, and teach others about it.

Yvonne seemed to have an endless supply of enthusiasm and energy. She took daily walks and even cross-country skied well into her 90's. At her memorial service, we heard stories of Yvonne and Don's road trip to and back from Alaska, how Yvonne worked on her barn, about her deer hunting prowess, and about how she and Chris took a ride in a hot air balloon near Bad Axe that ended in a crash landing. All of this happened well after she was eligible for her free senior coffee, the balloon ride in her late 80's. We are not surprised she had 97 years of a good life and can only hope to keep pace with her.

Here is a link to Yvonne's obituary:

<https://www.pomeroyfuneralhomes.com/obituaries/Yvonne-Walker-3/#!/Obituary>

## Bob Haas

Bob Haas passed away on June 19. Bob was familiar to many of us from our various TLC activities, as a birder, or from his former position in the Fisheries Division of Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Back in 2009, Bob participated in our Black River Restoration meetings along the Black River near Carsonville. He helped us pull Garlic Mustard in the Dead End Woods Sanctuary several times. He was always a very diligent worker. He even joined us for an on-site meeting with The Carls Foundation and Ducks Unlimited on our new Bidwell Sanctuary in the fall of 2020. In the spring of 2020, Bob and TLC Executive Director, Bill Collins, toured the Saginaw Bay and returned the seed of several lakeplain prairie plant species to part of the Fish Point State Wildlife Area in Tuscola County.

During his last years in the Fisheries Division of the MDNR, Bob produced an extensive summary of the Black River in Sanilac and Saint Clair Counties entitled, *Black River Assessment*, published in 2009. It's a great reference and available at this link:

[http://www.michigandnr.com/PUBLICATIONS/PDFS/ifr/ifrilibra/special/reports/sr51/sr51\\_text.pdf](http://www.michigandnr.com/PUBLICATIONS/PDFS/ifr/ifrilibra/special/reports/sr51/sr51_text.pdf)

This is a report that anyone concerned about local watershed, water quality, aquatic communities, and land use history should not only bookmark but download.

Since 2016, Bob conducted butterfly surveys on two routes in the Port Huron State Game Area as part of a larger North American effort. Just like his other work, Bob was diligent in conducting his surveys. Anyone can start a butterfly monitoring route and the information collected is very important for butterfly protection. For more information, see the Michigan Butterfly Network web site at: <https://michiganbutterfly.org/>

Just weeks before Bob passed, he helped the TLC compile a list of native butterfly and moth species that could be killed by the spraying of *Bacillus thuringiensis* or Btk bacterium in Saint Clair County.

We submitted this information to Saint Clair County and discussed our concerns with the coordinator who suggested that the spraying was proposed largely because residents simply don't like having caterpillars and not because of an expected risk of significant tree damage. This explains, in part, why most of the Port Huron State Game Area was not sprayed, and why the State delegated the local spray program to the County rather than making it a State priority.

Early last year, Bob was diagnosed with leukemia. Despite going through chemotherapy, he still conducted his butterfly and moth surveys, walking at least a mile each day. It was a very rough year after his wife Pam passed away last summer. Her loss was heartbreaking for Bob, but he persevered and was doing better until his condition relapsed in May. He started a new chemotherapy drug but it didn't seem to help. Yet again, another person we have known that received cancer treatment in Port Huron and didn't make it.

Here is a link to Bob's memorial page. There is apparently no obituary and no plans for a service yet: <https://www.smithfamilyfuneralhome.com/memorials/robert-haas/4959062/obituary.php#wall>

## Spongy Moth (Gypsy Moth) Suppression Update

As some of you may have read in our April newsletter, Saint Clair County was planning to conduct aerial spraying of *Bacillus thuringiensis* or Btk bacterium on select forest tracts to control Gypsy Moths, now known as Spongy Moths. While most publications emphasize that Btk is safe for pets, wild animals, and plants, they avoid mention of caterpillars of native moths and butterflies. The caterpillars of at least 45 species of native moths and butterflies depend on forest habitat in Saint Clair County, at least 12 of which feed specifically on oak trees. Before Bob Haas passed away, he found references to many more species that could be killed by Btk.

Saint Clair County landowners had the opportunity to opt out of spraying this year. Based on a review of the 2022 County spray block map, several land owners did opt out, including the Michigan Nature Association and a few owners that apparently read the TLC newsletter. The spray block map is available at:

<https://scc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/minimalist/index.html?appid=0bff01c79caa44c293c1ed0acbe4aad0&center=-82.5497,42.8966&level=14>

Starting on or about May 19, the Btk spraying was initiated. However, based on local observations in one of the opt-out areas in Fort Gratiot Township, the spray plane was observed flying over the general area at least a week before Spongy Moth caterpillars emerged from their egg masses. When they did emerge, there were very few, just as there were last summer. Part of the reason is probably that the area is dominated by Red Oaks which contain more tannin than white oak species and are therefore more resistant to Spongy Moth caterpillars.

Within about two weeks of Spongy Moth caterpillar emergence, there were almost none to be found on the same opt-out property in Fort Gratiot. The reason was quite clear. Birds were gobbling them up. There was a pair of Catbirds nesting in a line of Arbor Vitae trees that probably ate most of them. Other birds observed likely feeding on caterpillars included Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmouses, White-breasted Nuthatches, House Wrens, and House Sparrows. Even a Ruby-throated Hummingbird was seen a few times apparently hunting for insects under eaves, a picnic table, and other items. Birds heard in the vicinity that likely were eating caterpillars included American Crows, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Eastern Wood-pewees, Carolina Wrens, and an Eastern Phoebe.

So far, there does not appear to be any discernible Spongy Moth damage to any trees in the Fort Gratiot opt-out area. All of this reinforces what we said in the April newsletter. A strong native bird community goes a long way toward countering Spongy Moths. Woodland birds particularly consume large numbers of Spongy Moth caterpillars. It is estimated that one pair of Black-capped Chickadees may forage several thousand caterpillars to raise a single brood of young. A good native forest community is also more resilient, with healthy trees represented by high diversity on both species and genetic levels.

That said, we certainly understand the concern about Spongy Moths. When they first hit Saint Clair County in the early 1980's, large parts of the Port Huron State Game Area were defoliated. While most of our oak forests have survived, repeated outbreaks of the Spongy Moth can be devastating. There are currently few options for controlling Spongy Moths that don't do more harm than good. Application of Btk seems to be one of the better choices. However, there are many native butterfly and moth caterpillars that depend on forest habitat in our region. They are feeding in late spring and throughout the summer and are killed by Btk. At a time when our native insects are declining due to so many factors, we really need to be careful about harming them further. If Btk is sprayed, it really should be necessary and not just because people don't like caterpillar droppings in their pools.

As we mentioned in our April newsletter, you can do a few things to help control the next Spongy Moth infestation. First, look around your property for their egg masses. These are a light beige color and can look like spots of slightly fuzzy spray foam stuck to tree trunks, buildings, and other structures. They could be stuck to anything and are usually an inch or two across. There may be one mass or several all stuck in a group. Remove these masses as best you can and burn, soak them in a solution of detergent for several days, or otherwise destroy them. You can also spray the masses with a suspension of vegetable oil in water with detergent. You can place sticky barrier bands around tree trunks to prevent the newly-hatched caterpillars from climbing the trees in summer to feed. Keep in mind though, that these sticky bands will also trap a lot of other insects that are potentially beneficial to the trees and are rather cruel. Some people also use collection bands of burlap or other fabric in the early summer to attract the caterpillars during the day. The collected caterpillars can be destroyed on a daily basis. If you have extra time in the summer and can clearly identify the caterpillars and

moths, you can go around and crush them. There are lots of web sites to help you identify the Spongy Moth, the caterpillars, the egg masses, and with lots of suggestions. The Saint Clair County site is available at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2e4cc0965e8e4d1597dbb282cacc3d3c>

In the long-term, try to improve bird habitat on your property by mowing less area, maintaining native vegetation, planting trees, planting shrubs, creating a good source of open water, and installing nest boxes, particularly for woodland birds that feed on the Spongy Moth caterpillars.

## Ecology News

We continue our slant toward positive news. There's not much sense in focusing on the bad news if we don't try to make improvements. But, we do need to understand the full implications of the issues we hear and read about repeatedly. Maybe someone will be inspired with solutions.

### Once Nearly Extinct, Bison Are Now Climate Heroes

Return the bison to their rightful home.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2022/07/13/bison-buffalo-oklahoma-extinct-climate-change/>

### Scientists Rush To Save 1,000-Year-Old Trees On The Brink Of Death

What a shame. It's not good.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/07/14/these-trees-have-survived-1000-years-can-they-survive-climate-change/>

### The Genetic Power Of Ancient Trees

Not only ancient trees, but even the larger straighter trees too often harvested.

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20220623-the-genetic-power-of-ancient-trees>

### Friendly Fungi Help Forests Fight Climate Change

The significance of the hidden world of fungus increasingly revealed.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-61787248>

### How These Neighbors Use Fire To Revitalize Their Communities, And Land

Fire good. Be careful with fire but not paranoid. We need good fire back.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2022/06/07/1101257256/neighbors-use-prescribed-fire-to-restore-great-plains-grasslands>

### In Johnson County, Biologists Are Poisoning Trees To Save Birds And Butterflies

Kill all Bradford (Callery) Pear - *Pyrus calleryana*. We are seeing more of it spreading in the Thumb.

<https://www.kcur.org/news/2022-04-12/in-johnson-county-biologists-are-poisoning-trees-to-save-birds-and-butterflies>

### Lansing's Guerrilla Gardeners Commit Radical Acts Of Beautification With Seeds And Shovels

Just do it!

[wkar.org/wkar-news/2022-05-26/lansings-guerrilla-gardeners-commit-radical-acts-of-beautification-with-seeds-and-shovels](http://wkar.org/wkar-news/2022-05-26/lansings-guerrilla-gardeners-commit-radical-acts-of-beautification-with-seeds-and-shovels)

### Gardeners Urged To Let Lawns Go Wild To Boost Nature

Less mow and leave the leaves.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-61264905>

### Homegrown National Park: Let's Solve The Biodiversity Crisis!

Perhaps the most ambitious and potentially beneficial initiative we have seen in a while.

<https://homegrownnationalpark.org/20-x-20>

## **TLC Membership**

With your membership, the TLC is better enabled to protect important natural areas in our region. We offer three membership levels as shown below: Individual \$25, Family \$30, and Business \$100. Members will receive our e-mail news. Some of you are members based on your previous donations, volunteer efforts, or other 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](http://ThumbLand.org)