

Thumb Land Conservancy News

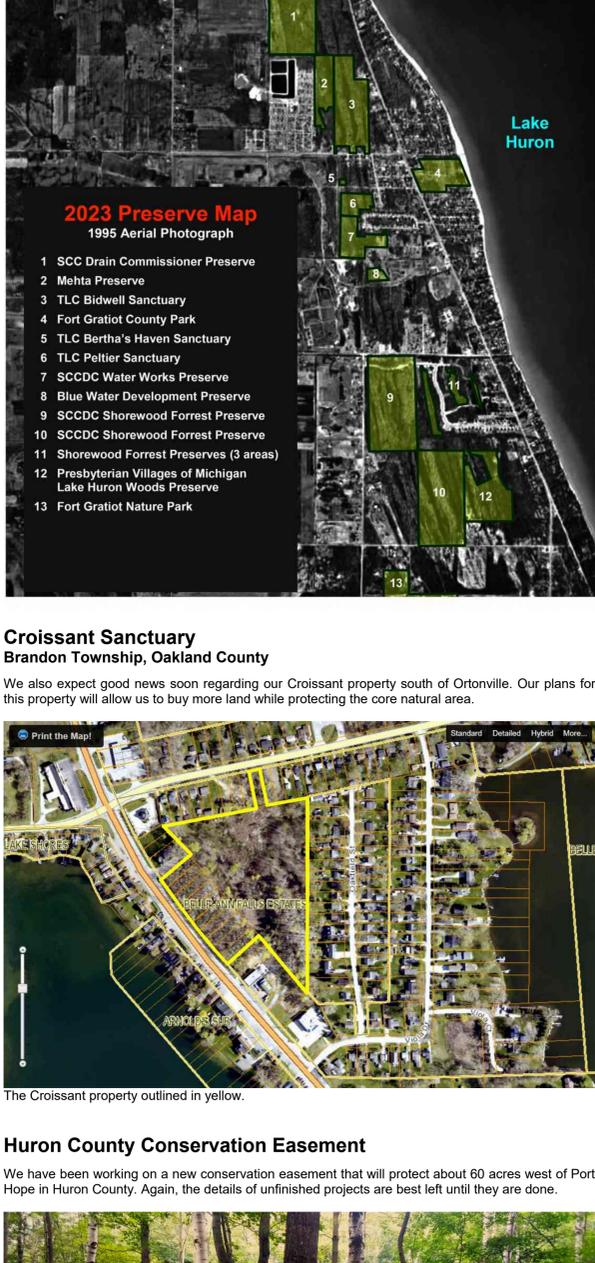
2023 October 09

The theme this summer has been "A Work In Progress". We've had several projects in the works that will result in more protected land in the Thumb. At least three projects should be completed by November if all goes well.

Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park Addition

Saint Clair County

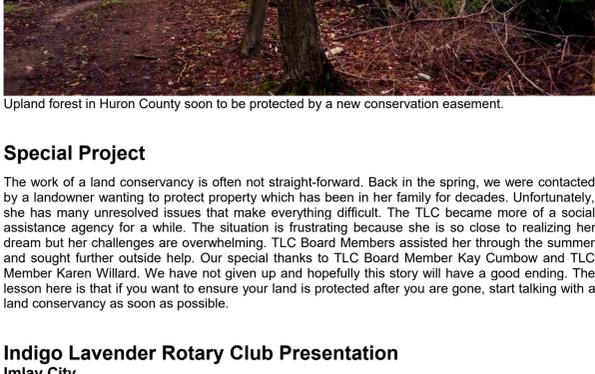
Hopefully, we will soon have good news about another preserve addition to the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park in Fort Gratiot. We'll save the details until after we close on the property.



Croissant Sanctuary

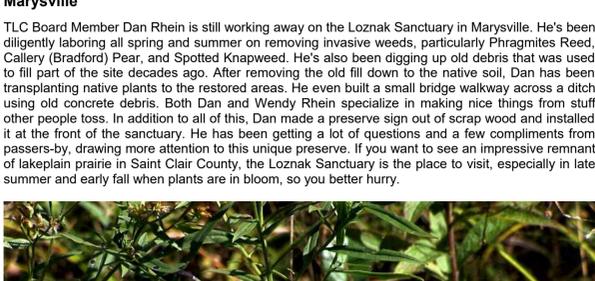
Brandon Township, Oakland County

We also expect good news soon regarding our Croissant property south of Ortonville. Our plans for this property will allow us to buy more land while protecting the core natural area.



Huron County Conservation Easement

We have been working on a new conservation easement that will protect about 60 acres west of Port Hope in Huron County. Again, the details of unfinished projects are best left until they are done.



Special Project

The work of a land conservancy is often not straight-forward. Back in the spring, we were contacted by a landowner wanting to protect property which has been in her family for decades. Unfortunately, she has many unresolved issues that make everything difficult. The TLC became more of a social assistance agency for a while. The situation is frustrating because she is so close to realizing her dream but her challenges are overwhelming. TLC Board Members assisted her through the summer and sought further outside help. Our special thanks to TLC Board Member Kay Cumbow and TLC Member Karen Willard. We have not given up and hopefully this story will have a good ending. The lesson here is that if you want to ensure your land is protected after you are gone, start talking with a land conservancy as soon as possible.

Indigo Lavender Rotary Club Presentation

Imlay City

On August 16, TLC Executive Director Bill Collins gave a presentation about the TLC to the Imlay City Rotary Club at Stevo's Bar and Grill Banquet Facility. The TLC thanks Trish Dennis of Indigo Lavender Farm for her invitation to share our work and also Mary, Manager of Stevo's Banquet Facility for her very helpful assistance.

Loznak Sanctuary

Marysville

TLC Board Member Dan Rhein is still working away on the Loznak Sanctuary in Marysville. He's been diligently laboring all spring and summer on removing invasive weeds, particularly Phragmites. Reed, Callery (Bradford) Pear, and Spotted Knapweed. He's also been digging up old debris that was used to fill part of the site decades ago. After removing the old fill down to the native soil, Dan has been transplanting native plants to the restored areas. He even built a small bridge walkway across a ditch using old concrete debris. Both Dan and Wendy Rhein specialize in making nice things from stuff other people toss. In addition to all of this, Dan made a preserve sign out of scrap wood and installed it at the front of the sanctuary. He has been getting a lot of questions and a few compliments from passers-by, drawing more attention to this unique preserve. If you want to see an impressive remnant of lakeplain prairie in Saint Clair County, the Loznak Sanctuary is the place to visit, especially in late summer and early fall when plants are in bloom, so you better hurry.



Bidwell Sanctuary

Bidwell Township, Saint Clair County

Work will soon begin on the new information kiosk and signs at the Bidwell Sanctuary entrance along Metcalf Road. Our work has been delayed by numerous issues, not the least of which was the relentless rain this summer followed by the mosquitoapocalypse. We will be using Black Locust logs cut from at least two of our preserves. Although Black Locust trees are native to the south-central US, probably around the Appalachians and the Ozarks, they are invasive in our area, as species in the Legume family tend to be. Black Locust spreads prolifically by root suckers that quickly form dense groves which few other trees can survive. The good part is, because of high flavonoid content, Black Locust wood is extremely rot-resistant. Black Locust fence posts have been known to last a century or more. It's better than treated lumber because it does not require arsenic or copper, and better than cedar because cutting it improves rather than diminishes native habitat.



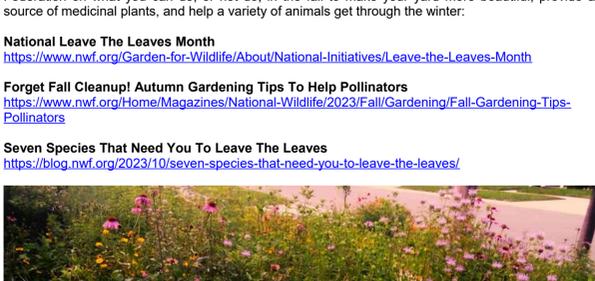
Clyde Historical Society and TLC Heritage Event

The TLC is planning a natural heritage event for next spring with the Clyde Historical Society. There are no definite plans yet, but we envision an exhibition combining local history and local natural history, or in other words, our natural heritage. Various participants will be invited with a focus on 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 if you do a little digging. If you want to help or exhibit, let us know.



TLC Membership Gifts

In August, we sent out our first batch of TLC membership packages with embroidered TLC patches, TLC bumper stickers, hand-made stationary stamped with the TLC logo, and TLC cards. Our special thanks to TLC Member Wendy Rhein for making the stationary from recycled junk mail. She does very nice work. We still have a few more packages to go out. We are still planning to offer hemp bags with the TLC logo but have not found a supplier yet. Two different embroidered patches are available; one featuring the TLC logo given for memberships, and the other featuring rare species of the Thumb for donations of at least \$10 above membership level.



You Got The Power

Save Nature Any Place! Sustain Native Animals & Plants!

This year, we have highlighted restoration of nature on private land, citizen efforts in their neighborhoods, and programs like Homegrown National Park, National Wildlife Certified Wildlife Habitat, and the TLC Naturehood registry. For more information, see our previous newsletters. As we suddenly pass from late summer into autumn, we hope that you will do everything you can to support native plants and especially wildlife as winter draws closer. One of the best and easiest things you can do is simply leave the leaves. Here's a few articles from the National Wildlife Federation on what you can do, or not do, in the fall to make your yard more beautiful, provide a source of medicinal plants, and help a variety of animals get through the winter:

National Leave The Leaves Month
<https://www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/About/National-Initiatives/Leave-the-Leaves-Month>

Forget Fall Cleanup! Autumn Gardening Tips To Help Pollinators
<https://www.nwf.org/Home/Gardening/National-Wildlife/2023/Fall/Gardening/Fall-Gardening-Tips-Pollinators>

Seven Species That Need You To Leave The Leaves
<https://blog.nwf.org/2023/10/seven-species-that-need-you-to-leave-the-leaves/>



While the world is distracted by the selfish money part of land ownership, there can be a quiet and benevolent aspect of 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 humanity, 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 safe 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. Besides that, there is a lot to be said for adding a little beauty to your world.

TLC Fall Stewardship

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

Date	Activity	Location
October - December	trail and park entrance work	Bidwell Sanctuary
October - December	invasive weed control and clean-up	North Street Station

Clyde Historical Society

The Clyde Historical Society meets on the third Thursday of each month. The next meeting is October 19 at 6:30 pm at the Ruby Lions Club Hall located at 4535 Brott Road in Ruby. 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/>

Black-capped Chickadee, *Poecile atricapillus*

By Tom Dennis



The Black-capped Chickadee is one of our most common backyard feeder birds and is well-known for many reasons including coloration, song, and boldness around mankind. During my many years of studying, writing, and talking about birds, I've heard many complaints about other bird species, however, I've never heard anyone complain about the friendly and cheery Black-capped Chickadee. This common and seemingly simple species is anything but simple. I think you will be amazed by some of the unique qualities that make this tiny bird "fly above" much of creation.

I'll be brief with coloration as most of you are aware of this. They are considered to be a medium-sized chickadee but they are a small bird with a length of 5.5 inches and weigh in at 0.4 ounce. Their primary color is gray with white underparts and an olive-buff wash on the flanks. The gray wing and tail feathers are edged with white and their white cheeks are sharply bordered by a black bib below and by the "namesake" and unique black cap above. The short bill is black and eyes are dark brown but usually appear black.

Black-capped Chickadees are one of six chickadee species found in the lower 48 states. They have the largest range of any of the other six; the southern border is found generally above 40 degrees north latitude close to the northern border of Ohio. They range north to most of Alaska and inhabit all of Canada below the Hudson Bay, extending farther north as you head west. They are considered non-migratory and one of their unique features involves how they handle extreme cold weather. They are one of very few birds that can significantly lower their body temperature to conserve energy and enhance survival, a condition known as "a state of torpor". Their normal body temperature of 108F can safely fall to 86F which is amazing when we consider that humans reach the danger level of hypothermia with a drop from 98.6F to only 95F! They also are known for caching food (both seeds and insects), and during cold and windy weather they limit foraging distances and also lower their flight levels to take advantage of protective vegetation and other ground features.

They have many song types the most common being their namesake "chick-a-dee-dee" call and the springtime "fee-bee" call. Their songs are actually one of the most complex vocalizations known in the animal world and computer analysis along with visual study indicates that the communications are so unique that they can even identify predators to species level with alarm call variations and, indicate individual birds or particular flocks of birds. If you listen carefully you may pick up on the "chick-a-dee-dee" warning; the more times the "dees" are repeated the higher the warning level. The highest number of "dees" recorded is twenty three, reserved for their prime threat, the Pygmy Owl. The "dee" is comprised of four distinct notes that are made in simultaneous groupings of two or three of the four notes. This is made possible by the bird's syrinx, an organ much more complex than our larynx. This "fee-bee" song is made by both sexes but most commonly by males when defending mating territories. Listen up men, the best singers get the women! This song can vary geographically but in our area the "fee-bee" is very clearly the musical notes "C" followed by "A" and is heard every spring.

These common "feeder" birds are attracted by suet and black-oil sunflower seeds which they carry to a branch to crack and eat and possibly cache. Food items are stored in various sites including bark, clusters of dead leaves or conifer needles or knotholes and the birds memory of the cache location can last up to 28 days with shorter-term memory even remembering food type and quality. I often can't even remember what I had for breakfast! Their food of choice is insects and that includes overwintering insect eggs and larvae. Keep your feeders full, especially during extremely cold weather when their survival rates double with the availability of supplemental foods.

You can learn more about birds and beards 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, tend to 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.

Ecology News

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 the articles to those dealing with issues largely specific to our region. The commentary here is solely the expression of TLC Executive Director Bill Collins.

Opinion: Supreme Court Undoing 60 Years' Worth Of Environmental Progress
Back in May, the US Supreme Court effectively deregulated most wetlands across the US. With such an endlessly divided Congress, there is no hope of legislatively restoring the critical wetland protections we had for a half century. The ignorance of today is staggering.
<https://www.ehn.org/supreme-court-ruling-clean-water-act-2660767161.html>

The EPA Removes Federal Protections For Most Of The Country's Wetlands
Unfortunately, the EPA has to follow what nine out of ten neutral people decide rather than what the majority of us want. Thank God that Michigan has its own wetland protection statute, effective since 1980. But look for most of that law to be eliminated when the Republicans regain control of the Michigan legislature. A conservative citizen group is currently opposing development of an electric vehicle battery plant on a site in west Michigan with a lot of wetland. They kept asking if their rallies where all the environmentalists were to help, as though we are one big herd. Unfortunately, their opposition to environmental regulations in the past have made our work that much harder. Few of us in this line of work would blame anyone for not bothering to try anymore. Well, now this conservative citizen group is suing to stop the battery plant using federal and Michigan wetland statutes. Hopefully they prevail, but they may soon learn that gutting federal wetland regulation was a huge mistake.
<https://www.npr.org/2023/08/29/1196654382/epa-wetlands-waterways-supreme-court>

Carbon Credit Speculators Could Lose Billions As Offsets Deemed 'Worthless'
This could have been predicted as the carbon credit wave began. Anyone selling carbon credits in most tropical nations probably needs a small military. In the mean time, Michigan has relatively climate-resilient forest in a fairly stable region where credits could be managed more easily.
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/aug/24/carbon-credit-speculators-could-lose-billions-as-offsets-deemed-worthless-aoc>

Nearly 1,000 Migrating Songbirds Perish After Crashing Into Windows At Chicago Exhibition Hall
What a tragedy. Humanity is seemingly on the cusp of harnessing fusion and yet, largely unable or unwilling to create or use windows that are safe for birds.
<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/nearly-1000-migrating-songbirds-perish-after-crashing-into-windows-at-chicago-exhibition-hall/ar-AA1h07EG>

One Of The World's Most Invasive Species Found In Michigan For The First Time Ever
Hydrilla. Just what we need - another invasive weed!
<https://www.msn.com/en-us/travel/tripideas/one-of-the-world-s-most-invasive-species-found-in-michigan-for-the-first-time-ever/ar-AA1hGT19?oid=msedgntp&cvid=a770b11de8d745edbf1e95b504947fd&ei=60>

Control For Frog-Bit And Water Soldiers
And there's more.
<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-environment-watch/control-frog-bit-and-water-soldiers>

How To Attract Dragonflies For A Mosquito Free Yard And Garden!

Dragonflies are our excellent good friends. This guy is likely near a pond where dragonflies breed as they usually stay near semi-permanent water. Otherwise, the easiest thing you can do according to this video is make dragonfly perches by putting sticks in the ground.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Kx2im0ceCc>

Local Elimination Of Mosquitoes Is Possible. Here's Why We Shouldn't Simply Kill Them All

Mosquitoes do actually serve some important and surprising functions. But if you had asked this summer, even some of us die-hards would likely have voted to obliterate them.

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/09/12/us/mosquito-control-elimination-us-scn-wellness/index.html>

Planting A Meadow And Growing A Community

Who needs Dale Carnegie when you can just grow a meadow?

<https://www.npr.org/2023/09/20/1199011221/meadow-planting-wildflowers-vermont>

Poison Ivy Is Poised To Be One Of The Big Winners Of A Warming World

Wonderful.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2023/09/17/1199909434/poison-ivy-rash-climate-change>

Bigger, Earlier And Itchier: Why Poison Ivy Loves Climate Change

Some of us have noticed for years how bad Poison Ivy is just south of Detroit compared to the Thumb. Forests across large parts of Indiana and Ohio are covered.

<https://www.wbur.org/news/2023/08/22/bigger-earlier-and-itchier-why-poison-ivy-loves-climate-change>

Harmful Algal Blooms Appearing On Lake Erie Earlier Than Usual

And still this is a mystery. It must be all of those failing residential septic fields. Except for Iowa, the top 8 states in the US with the highest acreage of tiled fields are right next to the Great Lakes. According to USDA data, as of 2017, 49% of crop fields in Ohio and Indiana were tiled, followed by 39% in Illinois, 38% in Michigan, and 37% in Minnesota. After Iowa at 53%, the next highest percentage of tiled fields outside of the Great Lakes basin was at only 7%. Most other states were at 6% or less.

<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-environment-watch/harmful-algal-blooms-appearing-lake-erie-earlier-usual>

MDARD Issues Advisory Regarding Unsolicited Packages Of Seeds From China

Hybrid war is now open-pollinated. Considering how many billions of dollars are spent on invasive species control, this really needs to be taken more seriously.

<https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/about/media/pressreleases/2023/09/13/mdard-issues-advisory-regarding-unsolicited-packages-of-seeds-from-china>

The Beautiful Flowers That Bees Can't Use

So many ornamental plants are of no benefit to animals. For decades, plant varieties have been selected for color, size, and traits other than nectar, pollen, and fruit production vital to pollinators and other animals. In recent years, many genetically modified plants even contain lethal compounds. It is so much better to plant locally sourced native species.

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20230222-the-beautiful-flowers-that-bees-cant-use>

At Long Last, Researchers Discover Diet Of Michigan's Only Venomous Snake

Not so surprising, they eat a lot of mice and voles. The primary benefit of this great analysis tool is that it allows better habitat management for the federally Threatened Eastern Massasauga.

<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-environment-watch/long-last-researchers-discover-diet-michigans-only-venomous-snake>

George Monbiot - <https://www.monbiot.com/>

We owe this next article to our resident Green Guardian, John Fody. He was promised a few months ago that George Monbiot would be featured in the TLC news. Some will find Monbiot extreme on certain issues. However, he sways as much to the right as to the left, or conservative as to liberal, or whatever. He tends to take everything to a logical conclusion, but sometimes within narrow constraints. For example, he is no fan of the popular resurgence of small-scale traditional agriculture as a means of feeding the world, and rightly so considering the level of production needed. But he doesn't clearly scrutinize all costs of industrialized systems, or recognize the myriad of long-term benefits of maintaining and improving traditional methods. Despite this, Monbiot's reasoning is solid and he seems to be as concerned for all of humanity as for nature. As he says on his web site, "*I love not man the less, but Nature more.*" Regardless, it's good to read something once in a while that stimulates and challenges our thinking.

Following is a link to an article that John Fody GG sent back in August. The information is particular to Britain, but universal and descriptive of the same problem we have here in Michigan and North America.

The Unhowled Land

Without wolves or lynx, our ecosystems remain barren, depleted and overrun by proliferating deer

By George Monbiot, published in The Guardian 11th August 2023

<https://www.monbiot.com/2023/08/14/the-unhowled-land/>

Help Fund The TLC With CARS

Like many non-profit organizations these days, you can now support the TLC by donating old vehicles through CARS - Charitable Adult Rides and Services. CARS donates 70% of the net income from all vehicle donations to their non-profit partners such as the TLC.



Depending on your tax situation, your vehicle may be more valuable as an itemized deduction than the income you might get by selling it. Not only do you avoid the hassle of advertising and dealing with potential buyers, but you don't need to get the vehicle in running condition. CARS accepts any vehicle, driveable or not.

To donate, see our donation page at: <https://careasy.org/nonprofit/thumb-land-conservancy>

Or call 855-500-7433

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

