



There's no place like *Leelanau*.

Conserving the Land, Water and Scenic Character of Leelanau County

Fall Newsletter 2021



From Our Executive Director

The future depends on what you do today.

– Mahatma Gandhi

At the Leelanau Conservancy, the long game has always been central to our thinking, while seizing the opportunities presented to us today. Of course, so many of our opportunities of “today” have been the result of careful planning and relationship-building for years, if not decades.

The times in which we currently live and work are filled with both challenges and opportunities. The real estate market has never been hotter, and the development pressures are as high as we’ve ever witnessed. And, in addition to the summer crowds, we have even more evidence that we’ve been discovered; The Oxford Essential World Atlas, published earlier this year, actually features the Leelanau Peninsula on its cover. There’s no doubt about it, we are in a race to save Leelanau. We’ve always known it, but the pace has assuredly quickened.

Thankfully, for nearly three and a half decades we’ve been quietly building strong, mutually-respectful relationships with landowners throughout Leelanau County, and we’ve seen an ever more prevalent community ethic that there’s no place like Leelanau and together, we’ll work to keep it that way.

All of this spadework has been absolutely crucial to our success, but we couldn’t have done it without your enthusiastic philanthropic and moral support. Because of you, we have a tremendous track record and reputation for reaching our land and water conservation goals. 2020 was undoubtedly one of our most challenging years ever. Yet, we faced down some truly serious adversity and saved another 1000 acres, closing a single-year record of 13 conservation projects. These include adding 350 more acres of precious forestland to our existing Palmer Woods Forest Reserve, putting us at nearly 1,100 total acres for the Reserve and protecting a 5-mile border of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. These are honest-to-goodness victories, inspired by you.

For 33 years, we’ve done it together, folks. Thanks to you - our passionate, loyal supporters, our fiercely dedicated volunteers and our talented and committed staff and board of directors. We are deeply indebted and grateful to you all.

In 2021, we are still going strong with more than a dozen new projects in progress. We are already working to preserve seven more family farms and five new natural lands projects, including a critical 22-acre watershed feature to our Chippewa Run Natural Area in Empire Township. All told, we are working to save over a thousand more acres of our precious Peninsula.

Yes, there are some changes in the wind. But together, we will continue to save the best of Leelanau and protect the Peninsula’s character. Today’s victories preserving the continuing beauty and integrity of Leelanau are the manifestation of that very future for which we have worked and continue to unfailingly toil. Your Conservancy never stops working. We cannot. We are in a race. In a word, Leelanau’s future continues to depend on the vital and urgent work we are doing to save her today.

Sincerely,



Tom Nelson
Executive Director



*Cover photo by Sheen Watkins
Photo (right) of Chad Jordan, trailbuilder at
Palmer Woods Forest Reserve,
by Sheen Watkins.*





The Summer of the Trail

2021 was the summer of the trail. Eight miles of new mountain bike trails kicked off progress at Palmer Woods Forest Reserve this summer, more than doubling the length of the current trail system. The focus of the Phase 2 trails at the Conservancy's largest property is to expand the options for riders of all ability levels. Two beginner level trails and one intermediate level loop will be added to the existing 5.5 miles of intermediate trails. With the successful acquisition of 350 acres added to Palmer Woods in 2020, the 1070-acre forest reserve is full of backwoods beauty and will soon have plenty of options to explore by bike, ski or foot.

Spectrum, a contractor who is known for building some of the region's top mountain bike trails, has been hired as the trailbuilder. "They took a lot of time on the front end hiking up and down the moraines with their equipment to really get a feel for the landscape. They're super invested," says Executive Director Tom Nelson. "The crew rides every night after building during the day to make sure all the rhythms are right." The builders also pay particular attention to sustainability, which includes the grade and slope of the trail and how it reacts to water. "The goal is to make the trail seem like it's an extension of the terrain," said Property & Trail Maintenance Specialist Chad Jordan.

While single-use mountain bike trails are the focus for Phase 2, more hiking and ski trails will be coming in 2022-23. "The Conservancy is committed to providing the best experience for all users whether hiking, biking, or skiing, to maintain the majestic deep woods feel of Palmer Woods," says Tom. "Our vision is to protect the Glen Lake, Crystal River and Good Harbor Bay Watersheds and the biodiversity on all 1070 acres of Palmer Woods, while sharing these special woodlands with outdoor adventurers of all ages and abilities and in all seasons. Whether you're a hiker, a biker, a naturalist, a runner or a cross-country skier, we want you to have experiences that enable you to see, hear, touch and feel a reverence for this majestic forest," Tom elaborates.

The first new trail to open this past summer was one-mile-long Ursa Minor Loop; a beginner loop perfect for brand new riders, kids on balance bikes, and adults just getting into

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riding natural surface trails. The coaching loop includes five skill stations, which are mini-loops that allow the rider to practice fundamental trail riding skills. Here, kids can explore. "It's a closed loop, everything goes back to the parking lot, so its easy to navigate," says Chad.

The community aspect of the project is vital to the Conservancy. Chad interviewed six Norte coaches to help inform which skills stations to build. "I asked, if you could have anything in a coaching loop what would it be?" Norte, a youth cycling organization out of Traverse City, has a team of 18 kids who ride at Palmer Woods each Tuesday & Thursday evenings. The team has a waiting list. Several Bike Leelanau coaching clinics were also on tap this summer. "Most people learn to ride a bike by trial and error, but if you are taught fundamental skills, you progress more quickly. Having a certified coach or instructor really helps," Chad says.

In addition to the Ursa Minor loop, the three mile Ursa Major Loop opened. This true beginner loop is 1 ½ mile out, 1 ½ mile back. It has a subtle grade, and cardiovascular workout, no major climbing here like on the existing Enlightener and Acer Ridge trails. There are some small technical features, which are all rollable, or riders can go around them. "This loop adds progression from the coaching loop, which means it allows a rider to practice on smaller features to eventually build up to the same, larger features on the intermediate loops," says Chad.

Expected to open later this fall is the intermediate Fiddlehead Loop. "This loop plays right into the existing Ridge loops in terms of grade and cardiovascular fitness," says Chad. "It's on par with those true intermediate International Mountain Bike Association specs for trail width and feature height." The 3-mile loop has a one-mile connector to the to the Ursa Major beginner loop with plans to connect to the Enlightener and Acer Ridge Loops next year.

In addition to the new trails, new parking lot modification hubs will be added. These are shared

two way pathways with a 10 foot, roundabout-like circle. From the hub, a rider can connect to any of the departures. "There will now be two options from the parking lot instead of all of the options currently there, which can be confusing," adds Chad. "We're trying to make it all more user-friendly and intuitive. We will also be modifying the parking lot to better use the space and add a one way clockwise entrance and exit."

Want to know how to help? Join in. People who fell in love riding at Palmer Woods formed the Palmer Trail Crew 6 organically last summer. It started with "if you need something done call me up" and evolved into meeting up every Tuesday night. This year, it has evolved one more level and there are now four different trail crews. Trail Scouts, who go out and ride at least once a week and report anything that needs fixing. Then there's the brushing crew, who take care of vegetation that creeps with weed whips and loppers. And then the tread crew; once a scout finds erosion, this crew fixes it. Finally, the Bermmeister crew- these folks have a lot more technical experience and fix features. "Anyone can join the first three crews, and we're always looking for new trail scouts to act as ambassadors in the parking lot," Chad says. "Folks usually start as a trail scout and then work their way up to other categories."

When asked what he is most excited about for the trails, Chad can't decide. First he says "all of it". But, after a short pause, he elaborates, "the fact that it will be a recreation destination. Any time of year you will be able to get out and enjoy nature. There's something for everyone." As for the bike trails specifically, he's excited to bring in more beginners and offer more to the more experienced user group. "People will be able to ride 14 miles, over an hour worth of riding without doubling up on anything. Palmer is big enough that you can get that Deep Woods feel, like you're in the heart of the forest, and the best part is there's something for everyone."



Palmer Woods' Secret Garden

Ferns have stood the test of time. These ancient plants have lineage dating back close to 400 million years. At one point, they were a food source for some dinosaurs. Though prehistoric fern species are extinct, modern-day ferns have over 10,000 evolved species from those early plants. In an ever-changing world, there will always be ferns.

If anyone knows ferns, it's Dr. Dan Palmer. He spent his career as a dermatologist, and his leisure as a hobby botanist. He became an aficionado of ferns, authoring two books on Michigan and Hawaiian ferns. He is considered a top expert on both.

He bought his first parcel of land in Leelanau sometime in the early '70s. As time went on, he and his wife Helen slowly acquired adjoining parcels that amounted to over 700 acres. What does one do with 700 + acres of lush, Leelanau forest? Protect it, of course.

At 1,070 acres, Palmer Woods is the third largest protected land tract in the county. The hardwood forest is characterized by its towering trees and rich wildlife. As the Conservancy's largest property, we knew that recreation would be possible in unique ways. The first walking trail was established in 2016, followed by the first mountain bike trails in 2018. The fern garden is a unique addition to the forest that provides a destination within Palmer Woods that all will delight in.

The Fern Garden began as a passion project of Dr. Palmer's. He transplanted ferns from different parts of his property to a special area in the heart of Palmer Woods, near the property's only stream. The stream helps provide a happy home for all of the ferns by keeping their soil damp. After acquiring the property, the Conservancy took Dr. Palmer's idea and ran with it. More local ferns have been transplanted to the garden by the Stewardship Crew. Different varieties of ferns fill the garden, including some unique ferns found and transplanted from other natural areas.

A boardwalk winding through the fern garden will help the plants from being crushed underfoot, as well as give curious wanderers an up-close view and dedicated path to follow. The first section of boardwalk has recently been completed and stops just before the stream. The second half of the boardwalk will go over the stream, further into the garden. The garden has been strategically planted, with common ferns on the left of the boardwalk, and lesser known ferns on the right hand side. Eventually, interpretive signage will be placed to teach visitors about the dynamic species.

Dr. Palmer started this fern project nearly 20 years ago. We are grateful for the opportunity to continue his vision and share it with all who seek it out or find it by good fortune.



*Protecting
Leelanaui's
Precious Water*

For the past 31 years, the Leelanau Conservancy has kept tabs on the health of surrounding water by doing regular stream and inland lake samplings. These records are to keep the health of the lakes optimal. They're available to the public and used by local lake associations.

Our wonderful stream samplers sample 19 streams a month. All of these streams play roles in contributing to the vitality of the lakes around them. Once a month, May through October, pairs of volunteers go sampling various streams in Leelanau. On a warm June morning, we tagged along with Shelley Yeager and Jane Damschroder to see how it's done.

"The first stream of the day usually takes the longest," Shelley said as she put together the flow meter, an instrument used to measure water flow in the streams. The duo had three streams to hit, which might seem like a lot, but Jane noted that it doesn't usually take more than two hours to collect all of the samples.

Before getting started, the temperature, 70 degrees, was recorded. Equipped with waders and the flow meter, Shelley carefully stepped into the Cedar Creek. Jane handed her the end of a tape measure, and Shelley pulled it across the width of the stream, shouting "29 feet!" once reaching the other side. Jane wrote it into a small notebook, and Shelley recorded it in the meter.

The flow measure is taken at various points across the stream. A calculation based on the width of the stream determines which points in the stream they'll stop and measure flow. The temperature of the water is taken too, along with a scoop of water to be tested for nutrient levels. "This shows what's going on with this creek that flows into Lake

Leelanau that flows into Lake Michigan," Jane said.

Jane has been water sampling for the Conservancy since 2013. She and Shelley have been sampling together for the past three years. "My degree is in freshwater biology," said Jane. "I worked for a few years in water quality research for the state of Connecticut. Circumstances changed and I ended up in business. So doing this is going back to my roots a little bit."

Shelley methodically makes her way back to us after collecting the flow measurements. As she lifts her foot out of the stream she almost falls backwards into the water. With a quick turn, she avoids the fall. Jane laughs and applauds her agility. "What can I say?" Shelley smiled "I just go with the flow."

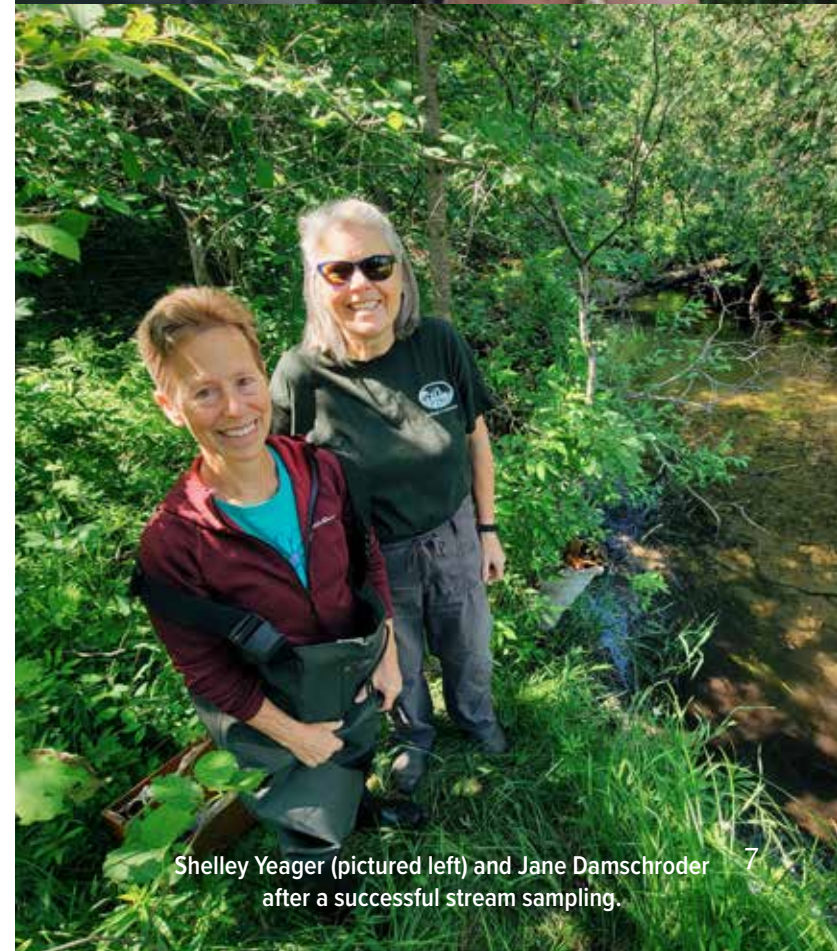
"Our stream samplers are some of our most dedicated volunteers. Six months out of the year they venture out to their streams and take a variety of measurements, rain or shine. They have allowed us to create a long-term dataset to track water quality throughout Leelanau County for over 30 years. Their time, dedication and care for this program is beyond measure," said Chase Heise, Conservation Easement Program Manager.

The lakes are tested more vigorously than the streams; however, the processes are similar. Instead of moving across the body of water, a water testing tool collects data from varying levels of depth. The streams don't get tested for nitrogen levels but the lakes do. Runoff and over-fertilization can raise the levels of nitrogen in the lakes, which isn't ideal. These water quality reports help track lake health over a span of time so efforts can be made to maintain optimum levels of nutrients.

Interested in stream sampling? Reach out to Chase at cheise@leelanauconservancy.org.

Photo left: Before collecting data, Shelley Yeager and Jane Damschroder measure the width of the stream.

Jane keeps track of stream data in a small notebook.



Shelley Yeager (pictured left) and Jane Damschroder after a successful stream sampling.

22 Acres Donated to Chippewa Run Natural Area

Chippewa Run Natural Area is located just outside of the Village of Empire with an ecosystem as scenic as it is diverse. When the land went up for sale, the Conservancy had no reservations about acquiring and protecting it. Beavers frolic in the pond, stealthy foxes patrol the shoreline, bobcats crouch low, and nearly 100 different species of birds enjoy the diverse habitat. It's also home to swamp-loving blue flag iris and cardinal flower.

In 2000 we protected 111 acres of Chippewa Run. A 1.5-mile trail built by volunteers and the Stewardship staff is primarily flat and winds around, offering peeks of some of the property's best views. It's also become a spot for birders to catch a glimpse of a green heron, meadow lark, or red-winged blackbird. Before becoming a natural area, this property was at risk for becoming a housing development. Thankfully, the Conservancy was able to acquire the property with generous support from the community.

Recently, an adjoining parcel of land that had been cleared and platted for multiple home sites was purchased by a local developer. The uplands were developed as originally planned, and the new homes had a view of pond wetlands on the property. The developer decided that these sensitive natural features would be put to best use as an addition to the Conservancy's Chippewa Run Natural Area. Developer and donor M22 Development LLC is happy to be a part of the natural area's growth. Jake Makowski with M22 Development states:

"After we split some buildable lots with views of the wetland from the parent parcel, we knew that it would be best for the area to have that natural area preserved," he said. "When we met with the Village of Empire Planning Commission for the public hearing and let them know of our intent, the feedback from the commission and the community was overwhelmingly positive, and we knew it was the right path forward. We're very glad that the

Conservancy accepted the gift and that the area will be preserved for the community."

Through this donation, 22 additional acres have been added to Chippewa Run, making it 134 acres. This portion of the parcel was not suitable for development because it is nearly all regulated wetland and supports a great many native wetland plants and animals. Director of Natural Land Protection Matt Heiman says it's "an ecological treasure."

"The land has high ecological value. There are a lot of sensitive and unique wetland features. It's a great addition," said Matt.

Though it's named Chippewa Run, the Anishinaabeg were the first stewards of this land and had settlements along the creek.

We acknowledge that the waters and lands the Leelanau Conservancy cares for and owns, including Chippewa Run Natural Area, are located on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabeg—the Three Fires Confederacy of the Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Potawatomi peoples. Since time immemorial, the Anishinaabeg have lived, worked, honored, and respected these lands. We further acknowledge that the land known today as Leelanau County is comprised of lands acquired under the 1836 and 1855 treaties between the United States and the Ottawa and Chippewa Nation of Indians.

Our recognition of the full history of the land we cherish and work to protect is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those on whose ancestral lands we reside. We give thanks to the generous care with which the Anishinaabeg, and those of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, have given and continue to give to this land and our Leelanau community.



Returning to Little Traverse Lake

On sunny summer afternoons the Shuperts sit outside and enjoy Little Traverse Lake. The water sparkles a shade of tropical blue, feathery clouds fill the sky, and right in the middle of it all is a view of Sugarloaf.

Teena and Mike Shupert have owned property on Little Traverse Lake since 1998. Teena has been coming to the lake since she was a child.

"I was born in Flint, but from the time I was a year and a half old, we would come up every summer for vacation. My dad worked with a fellow whose dad owned a house across the street on the north side of Little Traverse Lake Road. At the time, it was the only house around here. We rented it every summer."

Teena's childhood summers in Leelanau were filled with fishing, swimming, fireflies, outdoor dinners and endless memories. Once she was in high school, her parents bought a lake cottage in Irish Hills, ending their annual stays at Little Traverse Lake. However, the memories of Leelanau never left Teena's mind.

In 1985, she and Mike split a unit at the Homestead

with Teena's brother. They were working in medical sales in Miami, visiting Leelanau twice a year. The plan was to eventually retire in Arizona, but rapid development in their desired area drew them away. "It got so commercial that we wrote that idea off," Mike said.

Teena's thoughts drifted back to the serenity of those summers on Little Traverse Lake. "Mike said, 'You know what? I'd like to just buy a cottage in the woods.' When you're stressed out in a major city it just sounds like the perfect thing." A property for sale on north Traverse Lake fit the bill for a place in the woods, with the bonus of being a place that holds immeasurable nostalgia. They put in a bid, sight unseen, and their offer was accepted. They've happily called Little Traverse Lake home ever since.

Leelanau has given them respite from a fast paced world, and in return, the Shuperts have dedicated some of their estate to be given back to the place they love through becoming Heritage Society members.

"We became Heritage Society members in 2012, even before we were Sustainers," Teena said. "So much of the world is loud and busy. We couldn't imagine not helping protect this little corner of the world that is peaceful, slow, and so beautiful."

These days, Teena walks the trails she's walked her entire life, this time, as a resident, and with the pleasure of strolling arm in arm with Mike.

The Leelanau Conservancy's Richard O. Ristine Heritage Society recognizes those who have included the Leelanau Conservancy in their estate plans. It is named in honor of our former board member, Dick Ristine, Sr., who talked to everyone he knew about leaving a gift to the Leelanau Conservancy in their wills. For more information, please contact Leslee Spraggins, Planned Giving Officer, at lspraggins@leelanauconservancy.org or 231-256-9665.





AmeriCorps: A Year of Service

AmeriCorps members Veronica Bauer and Grace Nagle were hoping to spend their service term at the Leelanau Conservancy.

"Huron Pines has several host sites where we applied," Grace said. "Then we did interviews at those host sites. After the interviews, we picked our top three, the host sites picked their top three, and here we are."

AmeriCorps is a national service program that places volunteers for a 10-month service term. Volunteers get a living stipend and spend their days working on community betterment. Service terms all look different and have included constructing homes, serving at nonprofits, as tutors and mentors in education, and of course, in environmental care. The Huron Pines AmeriCorps program has been placing volunteers with the Leelanau Conservancy since 2017.

Grace and Veronica hadn't spent time in Leelanau before their service term with the Conservancy. Grace grew up in metro Detroit and Veronica in Wisconsin. Their first time meeting in person was the day they moved into a Lake Leelanau apartment this past February, almost strangers.

"We decided we would live together over email," Grace laughed.

"The first time we met was through Zoom to figure out living arrangement stuff," said Veronica. "We moved here at the end of January."

A mid-pandemic service term beginning in a Northern Michigan winter makes for plenty of time spent inside with wildlife books, natural life field guides, and virtually getting acquainted with the board and staff. On their first excursion out, Grace and Veronica went to take inventory of each bench throughout the natural areas.

"Our first outdoor project was for bench infrastructure checks. We were tromping through the snow, and Veronica has poor circulation in her feet, so she has these giant men's boots on," Grace laughed. "It was funny, and we got to get acquainted with a lot of the natural areas."

A big reason the Conservancy was in their top choices was for the opportunity we would provide for education and hands-on experience. Veronica graduated from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse with a bachelor of science, majoring in biology and minoring in environmental studies. Grace graduated from Michigan State University with a degree in environmental biology and minor in entomology. She's currently finishing up a masters on forestry. During their interview, they both expressed interest in working on different environmental projects. Grace was interested in delving into oak wilt - a fungal disease that kills oak trees.

"I had never experienced monitoring for oak wilt before. It's a fascinating health issue that I wanted to dive into. I've been able to do a lot of reading on it and surveying for it, which has been nice."

Veronica was interested in water quality programs. After the snow melted and the icy waters defrosted, she and Grace took to the streams to learn how to do samplings.

"We've been able to do stream samplings since May. Some of the water was 40 and 50 degrees, so you definitely don't want to fall when you get in. We've recently offloaded all of the data from the data loggers that we've collected from Leelanau streams."

"Data loggers track stream temperature," Grace explained. "So over time, we can graph out stream temperatures over months or years and compare the warming and cooling periods of each of them."

They've also gotten some experience with event planning. Throughout their service term, Grace and Veronica have attended lots of workbees, many of them focused on invasive species removal. These workbees are powered by volunteers. Thoughtful planning and communication are necessary for making them happen smoothly. Recently, Veronica and

Grace coordinated a purple loosestrife removal workbee. They've also planned an autumn olive workbee, and a Chippewa Run trash clean-up.

"Planning and coordinating was something I hadn't had an opportunity to do yet. I wanted to get experience leading something for personal growth," Veronica said.

Though their time with us is coming to a close, we are so grateful to have had their service, dedication, and sunny dispositions along with us for the past year. They started their term not knowing much about Leelanau. They're ending their term with new knowledge, friends, a reverence for this special place, and maybe a few secret swim spot locations.

"You don't always get to live somewhere where people are truly passionate about where they live, but the people who live in Leelanau really love it. It's been an honor to help care for a place that people care so much about," Veronica said.

Grace, Veronica, and the Stewardship staff constructed a new boardwalk in the Fern Garden at Palmer Woods. Their care and hard work will go a long way in transporting folks into the wondrous world of ferns. It's also just one of many reasons they'll both return to visit.

"I can't wait to come back in five years and see all of the ferns that have grown," said Grace. "I'm really looking forward to that."

Photos:

Opposite page: Americorps Volunteers Grace Nagle (left) and Veronica Bauer. Top right: Grace and Veronica getting an up close view of a native fern. Middle right: Veronica mows fern for trail maintenance. Bottom right: Some of the Stewardship Crew from left, Director of Natural Areas and Preserves Becky Hill, Grace Nagle, Property & Trail Maintenance Specialist Chad Jordan, Veronica Bauer, Anne Rodeck.



Stewardship Updates

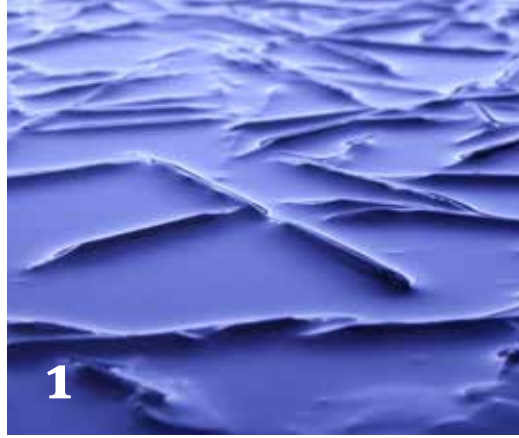
Leelanau is abundant with change. Deer are trading pale summer coats for their darker, denser winter ones. Deciduous ferns begin their descent back into the ground, and mornings become crisp and golden. The seasonal transition from summer to autumn is a reminder that with nature's patterns comes the passage of time. Our Stewardship Crew is always working to keep the natural areas at their best so you can get the most out of every hike, view, and moment of awe experienced through these magical changes. As we leave behind another summer we're grateful to slow down and spend time stewarding these lands we love all while witnessing their lovely metamorphosis. Here are some favorite photos of what the Conservancy has been up to over the last few months.

1. These cracks made in the ice near Swanson Preserve caught Property and Trail Maintenance Specialist Chad Jordan's eye.

2. A trail counter at Houdek Dunes Natural Area is a tool used to track how many visitors come to the natural area. Land Steward Emily Douglas's son Lennon takes an up-close look.

3. AmeriCorps member Veronica Bauer attracts a monarch while working at Palmer Woods.

4. Wild parsnip is an invasive that some TART trail volunteers found growing rampantly at DeYoung Natural Area. Conservancy staffers Lindy Kellogg and Emily Douglas, joined trail stewards and TART ambassadors for a removal workbee that hauled away four truckloads of wild parsnip.





5. With the fall comes apple season! McIntosh's texture quickly goes from firm to soft, making them ideal for cooking or baking. They're in season from early September to the beginning of November. Photo by Mark Smith.

6. Event season was in full swing throughout August and September. Pictured is a Sustainers Circle event held at French Valley Vineyard.

7. The restoration project at DeYoung has been completed. The historic farmhouse has already been put to use as a meeting space for board committees.

8. Stites Natural Area in Suttons Bay recently had a new trail addition put in. Stites is a tremendous natural area to visit during the fall. When the leaves fall off, the trees give way to an incredible view of West Grand Traverse Bay. Photo by Mark Smith.

9. Donation-based yoga classes ran once a month throughout the summer, with an excellent turnout for each session. Katherine Palms instructed classes, and all proceeds went to the Leelanau Conservancy.

10. A vacated turtle shell found at Cedar River Preserve by Communications Director Claire Wood.

11. Natural Areas Director Becky Hill found this orange oddity at Pat's Preserve at Lime Lake. It's a coral fungus, which typically grows on decaying vegetation and dead wood.

A Woodland Fairytale



A couple's marriage is one of the most memorable milestones of their relationship. Declarations of love are expressed, and a lifetime journey begins. When married couples recount their wedding day, oftentimes, they mention how quickly it all went by. Between cake cutting and visiting with their guests, they realized that they hardly shared a moment to themselves.

When newlyweds Lauren Dayton and Dan Rooner got married this past July 3rd, they made sure to have dedicated time set aside to have a quiet moment together. They spent part of that special time before the wedding ceremony at Teichner Preserve.

A secluded location and only 0.2 miles of trail make Teichner a quieter natural area. Martha Teichner donated the first 20 acres to the preserve to honor parents Hans and Miriam and their love. They had a fondness for Lime Lake, and on the right summer night, the pair would sneak off for a moonlit swim. Heart-shaped basswood leaves, wild roses, and rare ferns are only a few of the natural features that make this preserve feel as magical as it is romantic.

Though it's not typically the first Conservancy natural area that folks visit, it was the first for Lauren and Dan. Lauren grew up coming to Frankfort during the summer. When she and Dan began dating, she started bringing him on the annual trips. Together, they enjoyed exploring all of the beaches, trails, and roads throughout the area. When they found Teichner on one of these effortless excursions, they knew it would be a place they would return to time and time again.

"It instantly felt special to us," Lauren said.

When planning their wedding, Lauren and Dan wanted to keep sustainability in mind throughout the planning process. Keeping waste low was a priority, as well as using local vendors. Another facet of their sustainable approach was forgoing wedding gifts for themselves. Instead of a registry, Lauren and Dan asked guests to donate to the Leelanau Conservancy to support the Teichner Preserve.

“We have a home that’s furnished and a kitchen that’s filled with kitchenware. Sure, some of it doesn’t match perfectly, but that’s stuff we can accumulate later on,” Lauren said. “We wanted to help contribute to a place that is special to us. Having donations made to the Conservancy is something we thought would be meaningful not only to us but to our guests and all of the others who enjoy their properties.”

Before their ceremony at the Leelanau School, Lauren and Dan went to Teichner to recite their handwritten vows to each other. With only their folded-up vows and wedding photographer, they walked through the same wild and wondrous world that had captivated Hans and Miriam. They walked into a place they discovered together.

At the end of the evening, Dan and Lauren snuck away one last time. This time they climbed into a canoe and paddled Lake Michigan under a dusky, dreamy sky. Like Hans and Miriam, they know there’s something irresistible about a moonlit lake.

Gayle Egeler reached out to the bride and encouraged her to tell Martha the good news. A note was passed along from the bride to Martha.

“I was thrilled. What could be better than finding out that a place that’s so special to me could be special enough to this couple to start their married life there,” Martha said. “The pictures made me cry...with delight. Very romantic.”

Martha expressed her well wishes to the couple, making a perfect end to their wedding bliss at Teichner Preserve. In a note, Lauren wrote back:

“We look forward to returning to the Teichner Preserve often to reminisce about the day that started our married life together. We will think of you and your family every time for having created this beautiful oasis and for the inspiration to protect such sacred land. We also look forward to continuing to promote conservation efforts so that our beautiful environment can be preserved for years to come.”



*Dan and Lauren’s commitment to sustainability was embraced by their creative wedding planner, Stacy Horn at Juniper and Lace Events. Flowers were grown and designed by IndieGrow Flowers. The memorable moments of the day were captured by their photographer, Dan Stewart. Staff photo of the Teichner boardwalk.

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FALL for LEELANAU



In recent years northern Michigan has been made an autumn destination for fall color tours. With long stretches of uninterrupted trees and water, where better to immerse yourself in the rich reds and deep oranges of the season than Leelanau? Every

year we celebrate this golden season with Fall For Leelanau. We invite you to join us the week of October 17th for volunteer opportunities, hikes, and more, surrounded by peaking autumnal colors that will surely make you fall for Leelanau.



Photo by Mark Smith

