

Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy

Conserving Mid-Michigan's
natural, agricultural, scenic,
and recreational lands



midmilandcons.org

2022

Vol. 10

From the President

Paul K. Kindel

Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy (MMLC) has made excellent progress this past year.

In February 2022 we hired a full-time Executive Director for MMLC. Jared A. Harmon was hired as Executive Director after a national search and started at MMLC February 14, 2022. We welcome him to MMLC. Jared has made a strong start at MMLC. A biographical article by Jared is in this newsletter.

In Fall 2021, Kenneth A. Algozin, our Land Protection Specialist, decided he wanted to spend more time with his family and informed us that he would step down from his position in Spring 2022. He has agreed to continue to work for MMLC on an "as needed basis". This will allow him to oversee the conservation easements that he has underway, teach Jared the craft of preparing these easements, and assist Jared in learning the other operations required to run MMLC. Ken has done excellent work for MMLC, including starting two (2) new conservation easements and working on three (3) others. We appreciate his excellent contributions.

We are pleased to welcome two new members to the MMLC Board of Directors. James (Jim) R. Hewitt joined the Board in November of 2021 and Caitlin (Cait) Carpenter joined the Board in May of this year. Jim has had seventeen (17) years of experience in land stewardship as a volunteer for a variety of Michigan environmental organizations. Cait works with the Eaton Conservation District as a technician for the Michigan Environmental Agriculture Assurance Program. Autobiographical articles by Jim and Cait are in this newsletter. We heartily welcome both of them to the Board and look forward to their contributions.

MMLC was awarded national accreditation as a land conservancy (trust) as certified by Land Trust Alliance (LTA), the national advocacy organization for land trusts (conservancies), in March of this year. We are pleased to achieve national accreditation from LTA. An article by

Ken Rosenman about the accreditation process and the meaning of national accreditation is in this newsletter.

We are currently working with six (6) landowners on the protection of their lands with conservation easements. The lands have beautiful natural features, river frontage, lake frontage, wetlands, prairies, and include farmland. We hope to complete all or most of these conservation easements this year.

Enjoy the beautiful pictures of wildlife throughout the newsletter taken by artist Gijsbert (Nick) van Frankenhuyzen.

The members of the MMLC Board of Directors, and I particularly, thank all our MMLC members and other supporters for your generous financial support. Our land protection work is only possible because of the support of committed people like you. We are asking that you consider increasing your financial support in the coming year, if you are able. Our work on the current six conservation easements and the staff needed to do this and the other land protection work that we have in progress, plus the work needed to operate MMLC in general makes your support for the next year more important than ever.

Thank you for your membership in and support of Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy. Working together we can protect the natural lands and farmlands of Mid-Michigan for the future.



Male Wood Duck. Photo courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.



*Sandhill Cranes. Photo courtesy of
Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.*

Welcome MMLC's New Board Member, Caitlin (Cait) Carpenter

Article by Cait Carpenter

Cait, her partner Luke, and their family of dogs, rabbits, and a single cat, reside in the city of Mason. Growing up near Dansville, Michigan, on a small hog and poultry farm, Cait has deep roots in “rustic” outdoorsmanship and is an avid hunter, angler, forager, and self-proclaimed adventurer. She now spends as much time as possible at



Photo courtesy of Cait Carpenter.

family property in Cadillac and Baraga, turning over rocks and sitting quietly in trees.

Graduating from Michigan State University's Institute for Agricultural Technology, studying livestock production with a focus on small ruminant management, grazing, and land reclamation, Cait now works with the Eaton Conservation District as a technician for the Michigan Environmental Agriculture Assurance Program. Here she works with farmers and non-agriculture landowners to assess soil and water risks on their properties and assist them in mitigating those risks through environmentally conscious management practices. She sits on the Board of Directors for the Ingham County Farm Bureau and is the Membership Committee Chairperson, is an ambassador for Artemis Sportswomen (an organization dedicated to creating safe spaces for women and underprivileged communities in the outdoors) and sits on the City of Mason Historic District Commission.

Cait looks forward to introducing land conservation to farmers who are interested in preserving their properties for generations to come and hopes to bring the Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy into the conversation with these producers.



*Green Heron. Photo courtesy of Gijsbert
van Frankenhuyzen.*



*Northern Cardinal. Photo courtesy of
Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.*

Welcome MMLC's New Board Member, James (Jim) Hewitt

Article by Jim Hewitt

I joined MMLC as a contributing member in 2004 because of a strong belief in the importance of conserving land. Now on the board I bring a lifelong interest in nature and



Photo courtesy of Jim Hewitt.

15 years of experience in stewarding natural lands. The focus of my involvement on the board is toward the seven (7) parcels of land which are owned by the Conservancy. Rehabilitating these properties to increase the number of plant and animal species they support (greater biodiversity) and making them more known and accessible to the public are primary goals. Evaluating the potential of future acquisitions is also something with which I will be involved.

I have previously done environmental stewardship work for Michigan Audubon, Michigan Nature Association, Mid-Michigan Stewardship Initiative, Meridian Township, and State of Michigan and have served on the boards of Capital Area Audubon Society and Michigan Botanical Club.



*Male Bluebird feeding his hatchling. Photo
courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.*

Welcome MMLC's New Executive Director, Jared Harmon

Article by Jared Harmon

Jared Harmon was hired as Executive Director in February and will be working full time on land protection efforts in Mid-Michigan. Harmon is enthusiastic to be a part of MMLC and is appreciative of the services that MMLC offers by permanently protecting farms and natural areas. Harmon's passion for natural areas and wildlife was fostered from an early age growing up on his fourth-generation family farm in Augusta, Michigan. He spent most of his childhood outside on the farm exploring the forests along the Kalamazoo River and at his family cabin

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Welcome MMLC's New Executive Director, con't

in Grayling. Harmon credits his father for taking him hunting as a child and getting him involved in Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and 4-H.

Harmon didn't know exactly what he wanted to do after graduating from high school, but he knew that he wanted to help protect the natural world. While being a devoted fan of the MSU Spartans he fell in love with Marquette, Michigan, and decided that he couldn't imagine going anywhere else for his education. Northern Michigan University was a perfect fit for Jared as he could enjoy the splendor of Lake Superior and take a quick drive to explore the immense wilderness of the Upper Peninsula. He would complete his studies at NMU earning a B.S in Environmental Sciences with a specialization in Natural Resources, and a Masters of Public Administration.



Photo courtesy of Jared Harmon.

After graduation, Harmon worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service protecting Kirtland's Warblers in the cowbird control program and spent a summer maintaining trails on Isle Royale National Park for the National Park Service. Working at Isle Royale was a blessing for Jared where he had many encounters with moose, and was frequently serenaded in the evenings by the calls of loons or the howling of wolves. After Isle Royale he would take on a multitude of roles in conservation districts leading an invasive species cooperative (CISMA) in southwest Michigan. He would also work on projects on private lands to protect soil and enhance habitat for wildlife and pollinators.

In his free time his interests include raising cattle, pack-goats, and gamebirds on the family farm. He also enjoys hunting, fishing, hiking, kayaking, and camping in wilderness areas. As the steward of the family land, he is also passionate about using his knowledge and skills to improve habitat for wildlife.



American Robin. Photo courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.

Iosco Natural Area

Jim Hewitt

In 1837, the year the Territory of Michigan gained statehood, Joel Dunn arrived in Section 12 of what would become Ingham Township where he had laid claim to the southwest quarter of that section. His immediate neighbor to the south, in Section 13, was Joshua Doan. The two men likely traveled to their land in the middle of the new state on Dexter Trail, which exists today as two lanes of pavement a couple of miles south of their final destination.

In 2013 nearly half of Joel Dunn's original 160 acres was acquired by Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy through a donation by Mary Louise and the late Ralph Pax. It was given the name of Iosco Natural Area for the road on which it has southern exposure.

The area, now occupied by Ingham Township, was surveyed in 1826 by Joseph Wampler, part of the territory-wide effort to lay out Michigan's township and range system. The surveyors recorded notes during the course of

their work, citing terrain, land type, and vegetation. Here is an excerpt from a location just west of the corner of Iosco and Osborne Roads, very close to MMLC's property:

*“Set a post at the Corner of Sec's 11,12,13 &14
Land a little rolling
Timber Beech Sugar ash Lin”*

In the late 1990's Messrs. Comer and Albert, working for Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) used these survey notes to develop maps of pre-settlement vegetation for the counties of Michigan. Twenty-seven different types of land cover – forests, wetlands, grasslands, barrens, lakes and rivers were color-coded onto county maps broken down by section.

For most of Section 12 of Ingham Township (T2N, R1E), the map indicates Beech-Sugar Maple Forest. A narrow corridor of habitat identified as Shrub Swamp/Emergent Marsh is shown running north and south through the center of the section. When Joseph Wampler was walking east, in 1826, between Sections 12 and 13 he mentions crossing a “brushy willow swamp.” Today this is where Doan Creek is found.



Doan Creek. Photo courtesy of Jim Hewitt.

off of portions of five townships and send it north to the Red Cedar River. It is maintained today by the Ingham County Drain Commissioner as the Doan Creek Drain. Water which once stayed on the land providing wetland habitat now ends up in Lake Michigan at Grand Haven.

Today, MNFI has expanded and refined vegetative types, which it now refers to as natural communities. Beech-Sugar Maple Forest is now identified as Southern Mesic Forest. But the floral components remain the same and Iosco Natural Area, although much altered, can still be recognized, at least parts of it, as a remnant of Southern Mesic Forest. In the early 1800's these forests covered large portions of the Southern Lower Peninsula. Today



American Beech trees in Iosco Natural Area. Photo courtesy of Jim Hewitt.

At some point, probably around the end of the 1800's, the swamp was drained, and Doan Creek was formed. Evidence of this dredging (and of future maintenance) can be seen in the unnatural mounds that rise along the west side of the creek. Over time, as ditches and drains were constructed across southeast Ingham County to create agricultural land, a system was developed to move water



*Oyster Mushroom in Iosco Natural Area.
Photo courtesy of Jim Hewitt.*

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Iosco Natural Area, con't

few examples of quality Southern Mesic Forest remain and even most of these have been subject to some degree of human alteration and would not present as they did 200 years ago.

According to MNFI American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) and sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) dominate the canopy of Southern Mesic Forest. Other large trees include bitternut hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), white ash (*Fraxinus americana*), tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), white oak (*Quercus alba*), red oak (*Q. rubra*), and basswood (*Tilia americana*). The understory consists of beech and maple saplings and trees such as hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*) and ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*). Some half-dozen or more shrubs are also understory components. Per MNFI the ground layer is characterized by a high diversity of spring ephemerals. Eighteen species are mentioned.



Understory in Iosco Natural Area. Photo courtesy of Jim Hewitt.

The dredging operations were just one of the significant alterations to these woods. Over the course of 10 years beginning in 1980 the previous owner, Ralph Pax, contracted the planting of some 15,000 red pines (*Pinus resinosa*). The trees were placed in rows in a previously logged area of about 20 acres in the southwest corner of the property. Twenty-five hundred white pines (*Pinus strobus*) were also planted in the southeast corner. While only a fraction of these seedlings reached maturity those that did created an overstory of pines which replaced the native deciduous forest. In 2012 a logger was brought in and certain rows of the red pines were harvested.

Other logging of existing native trees occurred periodically. In 1996 eighty trees were marked by a forester, mainly sugar maple and American beech but also one sizable swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*). The high bid from a logging company in Clinton, Michigan was accepted and in October of that year the trees were felled.

A variety of easements are recorded on the property for minerals and utilities. It is not clear the extent to which disruptions may have occurred, or may yet occur, in these endeavors.

The remains of a fence can be seen running north and south about midway through the woods. This suggests that at one time cattle were allowed to graze on at least one side of the fence. No bovines in sight today but they have been replaced by the white-tailed deer. The population of these free-range animals has risen in many parts of the state to levels that are ecologically damaging.

After all of these disturbances what remains of this 1837 Southern Mesic Forest? Some large beech and sugar maple still dominate portions of the canopy. There are good numbers of smaller maples and other understory trees like ironwood. Joshua Doan's eponymous creek flows from his former property in Section 13 under a



Trees and creek in Iosco Natural Area. Photo courtesy of Jim Hewitt.

bridge over Iosco Road and north through Section 12. What is not here is a high diversity of ephemeral spring wildflowers. Only a few of the eighteen species that might be here, such as spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) and may-apple (*Podophyllum peltatum*) can easily be found in bloom. Native shrubs are also scarce. Too many herbivores is likely the main cause of this dearth of flowers and shrubs.

When formulating a land management plan it can be useful to think about what was here before (the arrival of Euro-Americans), what is here now, and what is likely to follow. From surveyors' notes we can imagine what Section 12 might have looked like. We know what it is like today. What will it be like in 50 years or 100 years? It won't be the same as it was in 1837. Absent genetic engineering passenger pigeons will not be stopping by to feast on beech nuts. But nature is resilient and since the last name of the present owner of these 75 acres is "Conservancy" there is a hopeful expectation that these woods can be allowed to return to a more natural state, one without exploitation, one where disturbances are not caused by humans, and one where a person can stop by on a bright spring morning, listen to the songs of birds and frogs, and enjoy a small piece of the dwindling natural world.



Blue Jay. Photo courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.



Doe and fawn White-tailed Deer. Photo courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.

Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy is Awarded National Accreditation

Ken Rosenman

On March 16, 2022, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded national accreditation to Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy (MMLC). Accreditation is a mark of distinction and recognizes those land trusts (conservancies) that meet the national quality standards of the land conservation community. The Commission especially recognized Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy for its "financial control policies and procedures and would like to share these with the Land Trust Alliance for inclusion in its digital library, The Learning Center."

The process of obtaining accreditation took place over a year as the MMLC board reviewed all its policies, and where needed, updated and codified practices in its handbook to ensure that MMLC operated with the highest quality standards. The application process was extensive and consisted of an 11 page application with 94 attached documents, and then a verbal presentation and responses to



The accreditation seal is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

Land Trust Alliance Seal of Accreditation.

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MMLC is Awarded National Accreditation, con't

questions. This was all reviewed by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission before accreditation was granted.

More information about the Land Trust Accreditation Commission can be found at:

www.landtrustaccreditation.org.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission was incorporated in 2006 as an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance (www.landtrustalliance.org) “to operate an innovative program to build and recognize strong land trusts, foster public confidence in land conservation and help ensure the long-term protection of land.”



Male Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Photo courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.



Land Trust Alliance accreditation plaque presented to Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy.

MMLC is a relatively young conservancy, founded in 2003, and the Land Trust Alliance was particularly impressed that we obtained accreditation on our first application! We are very proud to be accredited, which is an important milestone to ensure that the land we are protecting in Mid-Michigan will be protected in perpetuity. Accreditation is not a one-time award. To ensure that land conservancies maintain high quality practices they must be reassessed every five years. MMLC’s award is through March 15, 2027.

Supporting Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy into the Future

Paul K. Kindel

Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy (MMLC) is able to do its work of protecting our natural lands and farmlands in Mid-Michigan because of the financial support of its members and other supporters. Being a private, non-profit organization, we depend heavily on donations from members and other supporters to operate. Donations are essential for us to do our work. Your support is particularly important now that MMLC has full-time staff.

Following are ways you can provide financial support to MMLC:

1. *Donate by check.* (i) If your donation is \$250 or more, we will acknowledge the donation in writing and will state the amount given and the date it was given. Donations can be used as deductions for federal income tax purposes, if you itemized your deductions. (ii) **Note for 2022:** If you take the standard deduction on your federal income taxes, married couples filing jointly may additionally deduct up to \$600 (\$300 for single filers) if they donate the funds to a qualified charity like MMLC. They can use this deduction in addition to the standard deduction.



Male Red-winged Blackbird. Photo courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.

2. *Donate appreciated assets directly to MMLC without converting them to cash.* Appreciated assets commonly donated are stocks, bonds, and property. If you have owned the asset for a year or more, you may generally deduct the full market value of the asset, and if the asset is stocks and you donate them directly, you do not need to pay capital gains taxes. For tax purposes it is more advantageous for you to donate the asset directly to MMLC and not first convert it to cash. If the asset is donated without being converted to cash, the entire donation will not be taxed but the full value of the asset can be used as a deduction. If you donate property, specific documentation must be obtained. Consult with your tax advisor for tax advice on these and other donations.

3. *Donate funds to MMLC directly from your individual retirement account (IRA).* If you donate these funds directly to MMLC – which is an eligible, charitable organization – you do not need to count the donation as income. This is one of the few types of donations that benefits donors that do not itemize their deductions for federal income tax purposes. Essentially you receive the equivalent of a charitable deduction from your adjusted gross taxable income even though you do not itemize. To qualify: (i) you must be 72 or older at the time of the donation and (ii) you must have the transfer made directly from your IRA to MMLC, that is, your IRA plan administrator must make the check payable to MMLC and send it directly to MMLC, the funds must not go through

any intermediate, including yourself, they must go directly from your IRA to MMLC. The benefits are: (1) you do not need to include the donation in your adjusted gross taxable income for federal income tax purposes, i.e., on IRS Form 1040, (2) the donation counts toward your required minimum distribution, and (3) up to a total of \$100,000 can be donated in one year and it can be donated to more than one charitable organization. Again consult your tax advisor for advice.

4. Designate MMLC in your will or trust as the recipient of a bequest. Such a bequest allows you to make a significant gift to MMLC but does not require you to give the funds now. The bequest need not be cash. Various types of assets, for example, stocks, bonds, property, life insurance, etc. can be used as bequests. If you wish to name MMLC in your will or trust as the recipient of a bequest, you must use correct legal language. To include MMLC in your will, trust, or estate plan, we suggest the following language be used when stating the bequest:

I hereby give, devise, and bequeath to Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy, a charitable, nonprofit corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the State of Michigan, with a business address of Post Office Box 154, Okemos, MI 48805-0154 and an Employer (Federal, Tax) Identification Number of 38-2558197 _____% of my estate, or \$_____ (specify amount), or _____ (state item(s), for example, property, appreciated securities, life insurance, etc.).



Great Egret. Photo courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.

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Supporting Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy into the Future, con't

5. Many employers will give a matching gift when you donate to a charitable organization like MMLC. To find out if your employer makes such a match, contact your human resources unit and make a request.

Note: The above information is general information and is not tax advice. See your tax advisor for tax advice.

Donations can be sent by check to:

Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy
Post Office Box 154, Okemos, MI 48805-0154.
Checks payable to: Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy.

Donations can also be made through PayPal™. To make a donation through PayPal™ visit our website, www.midmilandcons.org.

Feel free to contact MMLC (Paul K. Kindel) by telephone at 517-332-3091 or by e-mail at kindel@msu.edu to discuss any of the information presented above.



Tufted Titmouse. Photo courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.

Stewardship and Volunteers

Jim Hewitt

Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy has acquired seven properties in Mid-Michigan, which have been designated as Natural Areas. MMLC plans to keep these as Natural Areas in perpetuity. Of these, Bunker Nature Preserve has received the most attention. Under the leadership of Trustee Eckhart Dersch, visitors can easily park and walk through that Preserve on mowed paths and trails and experience a variety of interesting plants, animals and habitats. Efforts are now underway to make some of the other six preserves more accessible to the public, and also, importantly, to increase their biological diversity by removing invasive plants. Several species of non-native invasive shrubs plague most natural lands in Mid-Michigan to some degree. They leaf out early and hold their leaves into late fall shading out native flora. MMLC is currently having work sessions to remove invasive plants, especially invasive shrubs, and to build trails. We could use the help of additional volunteers in this work. You would be working in a pleasant natural setting with other volunteers and would be learning about both native and invasive plants.

Interested in helping? Contact Jim Hewitt at tz4ggm@aol.com for more information on volunteering for this activity. We could use your help.



Male Red-bellied Woodpecker. Photo courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.



*Male Belted Kingfisher. Photo courtesy of
Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.*

Renewing your Membership in MMLC for 2023

In November of each year MMLC sends a letter to all members asking them to renew their membership. We will do so again this year. However, you can renew your membership now and it will save us work and funds. To renew now, use the self-addressed letter enclosed in this newsletter. If we receive your renewal by November 1, 2022, we will not send you a renewal letter in November. However, regardless of when and how you renew your membership, you will receive our Annual Report–2022, our next newsletter, and all other communications we will send in 2022-23 concerning MMLC activities.



*Tiger Swallowtail on a coneflower. Photo
courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.*

Memorials

Contribution given in memory of Clifford W. Welsch by:
Margaret Welsch

Contribution given in memory of George Grettenberger by:
Diane Grettenberger

Contribution given in memory of Robert Paul Zbiciak by:
Jim Hudgins

Contribution given in honor of Nancy Lapinski by:
Maria Lapinski-LaFaive

Contribution given in honor of Charity Krueger of Reading
Michigan by:
Ted and Patricia Ligibel



*Female Hooded Merganser and her ducklings.
Photo courtesy of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.*

Thank you to all our Contributors

Thank you to all our members and other supporters for your support of MMLC. The Conservancy needs your strong support in order to thrive, grow, and be able to protect the important natural lands and farmlands of Mid-Michigan. Your support is essential for our operations. Our work on the current six conservation easements in progress and the other land protection work that we have in progress plus the increased staff needed to do this work and the other MMLC work makes your support more important than ever.

Thank you for your past generous support and we hope you will be able to provide even stronger support in the year ahead. Your support is very important.

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Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy,
a nonprofit Michigan corporation

For more information, contact us:

E-MAIL: kindel@msu.edu

PHONE: (517) 332-3091

WRITE: MMLC

P.O. Box 154

Okemos, MI 48805-0154

WEBSITE: midmilandcons.org



PO Box 154, Okemos, MI 48805-0154

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Get Involved!

We welcome your involvement and support! Join us in our efforts to protect Michigan's natural areas, wildlife habitat, scenic lands, farmlands, and recreational lands so rural landscapes are protected.

Become a member. Volunteer.

Contact us to learn about opportunities to get involved.

Consider protecting your land with MMLC.

Learn about different options for protecting your land.

Additional information is on our website,

www.midmilandcons.org.

You can contact us by e-mail at kindel@msu.edu or by telephone at (517) 332-3091.

You may also donate online using the secure PayPal™ system at our website.



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