GLACIAL LAKES CONSERVANCY

Landscapes

Glacial Lakes Conservancy's Mission is to permanently preserve and protect land and water resources for future generations.

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Science is too important to be left to scientists alone

Get involved with Water Action Volunteers

By Ashley Muench
Land Project Coordinator Intern

GLACIAL LAKES CONSERVANCY IS NOW IN OUR THIRD YEAR OF MONITORING STREAM SITES AT WILLOW CREEK PRESERVE!

In partnership with Water Action Volunteers, Glacial Lakes Conservancy staff and volunteers brave the waters, wading into Willow Creek Preserve's streams to collect valuable stream data.

Water Action Volunteers is a collaborative organization, working with organizations and citizen scientists to allow for streams all across Wisconsin to be monitored for land management, preservation, protection, and restorative purposes. Because of Water Action Volunteers, Glacial Lakes Conservancy has the means to monitor stream parameters like dissolved oxygen, phosphorus,

Sean Babasin and Dusty Krikau measuring turbidity for the site "Tributary 2"

Ashley Muench holds a native crayfish, caught when teaching volunteers how to do a biotic index

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turbidity, stream velocity, temperature, and a biotic index.

Monitoring this data is an integral part of assessing the overall health of Willow Creek Preserve and its waters. We can better understand the baseline water quality, identify problems that need to be addressed, track changes, make drinking water treatment plants' lives easier, help save the waters of Lake Michigan for wildlife and humans, and plan management and restoration activities with water quality in mind.

"Science is too important to be left to scientists alone"
- Glacial Lakes Conservancy Water Action Volunteer.

We'd love for you to join us. Go here to learn more about how you can get involved: ***https://www.glaciallakes.org/volunteer-opportunities.html***

Trista Muench and Keegan Clapper measuring the stream width at the site "Willow Creek 2"

Blog 8: Enhancing the Willow Creek Preserve

By Gary S. Casper, PhD

BIODIVERSITY ***is the variety of life on Earth. The air you breathe, the water you drink and the food you eat all rely upon biodiversity. The variety of life on Earth is mind-boggling, with likely up to 100 million species. Yet biodiversity is in crisis, with as many as 1 million species now at risk of extinction. The Glacial Lakes Conservancy Biodiversity Blog will celebrate our biodiversity, showcasing real data from our preserves to inform our membership about the diversity of life we are helping to preserve. Love life!***

This blog highlights recent biodiversity restoration at the Willow Creek Preserve. In 2022, a Restoration and Land Management Plan for the Willow Creek Preserve was completed, which detailed a comprehensive plan for recovering native habitats and fish & wildlife diversity. The plan is now being implemented, project by project. Most of the projects focus directly on restoring native biodiversity, using a Focal Species concept. This means that we enhance habitats to support these particular species and the communities they inhabit.

Central Pond Work: Have you noticed a major change around the central pond, with all the trees and shrubs mowed down? It may look destructive right now, but this is the first step towards restoring these lands. One of our Focal Species is the Blanding's Turtle, and the turtles told us they wanted this project done. How do we talk to the turtles? Through our radio telemetry project, we follow them around, and they lead us to the places they like. When they find a spot that is important to them, for shelter

Blanding's Turtle in the Central Pond (photo G.S. Casper)

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or for food, they linger, giving us a message. They also show us their traditional pathways, how they navigate around the preserve and the obstacles they must bypass (like the railroad). The Central Pond has had an outflow dam installed to deepen it slightly, to support more insects and amphibians, which the turtles like. The brush mowing has removed invasive shrubs that will be replaced with native trees and shrubs, which better support turtles, birds, insects and amphibians.

Other Focal Species for this project are the Blue-spotted Salamander, Great Plains Mudbug, and American Woodcock.

Stormwater Remediation: Have you noticed the major gully erosion along the Mary's Lane ditch? We're planning a water quality project here to slow and filter road runoff before it enters the stream. The project will also include vegetation management to reduce invasive species. Once complete, it will improve conditions for focal species such as Willow Flycatcher, Northern Leopard Frog, Star-nosed Mole, and dragonflies. Bats will also benefit from the tasty dragonflies!

These actions are making the preserve a more diverse and interesting place, preserving the beauty of nature in the central city. Enjoy!

Blue-spotted Salamander (photo G.S. Casper)

American Woodcock (photo allaboutbirds.org)

Willow Flycatcher (photo allaboutbirds.org)

Special thanks to those who helped with the content and editing of this issue of ***Landscapes:***

Gary S. Casper, PhD
Miriam Duero
Pete Pittner
Jennifer Born Rutten
Martha Schott
Ashley Muench

Peter Annin to speak at GLC's Annual Fundraiser Event July 25, 2026

A veteran conflict and environmental journalist, Peter Annin spent more than a decade reporting on a wide variety of issues for *Newsweek*. In November of 2010, Annin was named managing director of the University of Notre Dame's Environmental Change Initiative, which tackles the interrelated problems of invasive species, land use and climate change, focusing on their synergistic impacts on water resources. In September 2006 he published his first book, *The Great Lakes Water Wars*, which has been called the definitive work on the Great Lakes water diversion controversy. In 2007 the book received the Great Lakes Book Award for nonfiction. He is now the director of the Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation in Ashland, WI. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a master's in international affairs from Columbia University in New York.

Message from the President Pete Pittner

We often say that we could not do what we do without the support of our various partners. This may seem cliche at times, but a recent project at Willow Creek Preserve (WCP) perfectly illustrates this reality.

Those of you who are familiar with WCP know the transformation that has taken place as part of our invasive species control project. This massive effort was made possible because we were able to hire professional contractors as a result of our partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. As grateful as we are for the funds provided for this project, they were not enough to cover the entire expanse of the Preserve. In order to accomplish that, we need to continue to look for additional support from our funders, donors and volunteers.

The first step in that additional effort took place this fall. As a "pilot" project, GLC staff and a group of volunteers removed invasive trees and shrubs from about ½ acre of land on the south portion of the Preserve. A tree and shrub sale supported by our new partner, LaValley Home & Garden, provided funds that were combined with a WDNR grant to purchase needed supplies.

In addition, many of you donated planting materials through the Lavalley sale that were utilized in this effort. Finally, even more partners then volunteered time to plant more than 100 trees and shrubs in the newly cleared area. The results of this project not only show what we can accomplish when we all come together, but the results will guide us as we plan future restoration activities on this portion of the preserve.

Once again, as this project shows, we can not do what we do without you!

GLACIAL LAKES CONSERVANCY

529 Ontario Avenue
Sheboygan, WI 53081
920-273-1143
info@glaciallakes.org

Glacial Lakes Conservancy is a private, nonprofit land trust that provides enduring solutions for land conservation in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Basin and serves Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Calumet, Kewaunee, and Fond du Lac Counties. Contributions to further our efforts are appreciated.

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Partnership with LaValley Home & Garden

In 2025, GLC's partnership with LaValley Home & Garden soared to new heights. With the help of the Brotz Family Foundation, LaValley owners Dana and Rachel, and GLC donors, the first native Spring Wildflower Plant Fundraiser was launched. This successful fundraiser helped educate on the importance of native planting for Wisconsin ecosystems and pollinatos. Naturalist Rob Zimmer was available at the May pickups to answer all your gardening questions. Because of its wide demand and success, we launched a fall shrub and tree (best time to plant these species is in the fall!) fundraiser as well. These two beneficial fundraisers will now be a part of GLC's strategic goals moving forward. LaValley Home and Garden is a fantastic local organization that gives back to our community and enhances and enriches our lives at all levels. GLC urges you to follow along as this partnership grows and to stop by its Howards Grove location.