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Bats at the Willow Creek Preserve

Data from our preserves demonstrate the diversity of life we preserve and protect

By Gary Casper, Biologist

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 diversity of life on Earth is mind-boggling, with likely up to 100 million species. Yet biodiversity is in crisis, with as many as one 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 constituents about the diversity of life we are helping to preserve and protect.

BLOG 1: BATS AT WILLOW CREEK

Bats are on the night shift hunting flying insects. By eating insects, bats save U.S. agriculture billions of dollars per year in pest control and they reduce mosquito populations in urban areas like the GLC Willow Creek Preserve. The Little Brown Bat can eat up to 1,200 mosquitoes an hour!

We completed bat monitoring at the Willow Creek Preserve during the breeding season (June–July) when only resident bats are present. We set an ultrasonic acoustic recorder to record bat activity from sunset to sunrise at three locations. The sleeping recorder awakens every time a bat flies by and records a “pass” (a digital sound file).

How does that work? The bat constantly emits ultrasonic sounds too high for our ears to hear. It uses these sounds like a sonar system, listening to the echoes to identify what is in front of it. This system is so sophisticated that the bat can distinguish between a leaf and a



GLC completed bat monitoring at the Willow Creek Preserve during the breeding season (June–July) using an ultrasonic acoustic recorder at three locations to record bat activity from sunset to sunrise.

mosquito by sound alone – gobbling up the latter.

We sampled three different sites at the Willow Creek Preserve: Session 1 (S1) was at the east end of the northern oxbow from June 1–22, Session 2 (S2) in the northwestern cattail marsh from June 22–July 10, and Session 3 (S3) in the southwestern fallow field from July 10–27. Bat activity is affected by weather conditions and insect activity (lots of insects flying = feeding frenzy) and increases as the season progresses. In late July, young bats also leave the nest and begin flying. Later this year we will run data analyses to identify the bat species recorded from their call characteristics.

Stay tuned for more exciting biodiversity data as we complete phases of monitoring in the next few years.



PERSERVERENCE paid off. It took nearly three years to complete the conservation easement on this beautiful 65-acre property in Calumet County owned by Martin and Carol Rudy.

Rudy Private Conservation Easement: A beautiful property is preserved at last

By Abbey Vizelka, Land Project Manager

ON A COLD VALENTINE’S DAY in 2018, I joined Martin Rudy and Dale Voskuil for a hike on the Rudy property in Calumet County. Mr. Rudy brought us into a cedar swamp wonderland with a crystal clear spring-fed creek running through it. The sounds of chickadees calling to each other, partnered with the smell of rich soil made me wish I could get lost for hours on this property! We then walked further to a high point where the cedars made way for beautiful sugar maples. The beauty in just these 15 acres was only a small piece of the nearly 65-acre property and a soon-to-be GLC Conservation Easement.

The other two thirds of the property that the Rudys manage is partly a prairie with a dug pond, and some of the Cottonwoods are so old and magnificent that we couldn’t fit our arms halfway around the trunks! The nearly 1550 feet of the North Branch of the Manitowoc River, with tracks from a star-nosed

mole and river otters, is an area of the property only accessible by foot in the winter, when everything is frozen, or by boat the rest of the year.

It took nearly three years to complete this conservation easement, but the wait was worth it when at the end of January 2021, we were able to file the completed document at the Calumet County Register of Deeds. This nearly 65-acre property is now protected forever from development because of Martin and Carol Rudy’s love for the wildlife they have seen at their home over the years. They have spent decades watching and identifying the birds flying above and the bats roosting in their barn. They have planted hundreds of trees to enrich and preserve this land. Visiting the Rudys is like being in a living school. They are always teaching us about what can be found on the property! This private Conservation Easement is an exceptional example of the GLC land trust dedication to protecting vulnerable natural resources in all five of the counties where we operate.

Message From the President

OUR TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

on October 9 gave us a time to reflect on the work that GLC has done to protect our natural environment. We have evolved from having a simple Land Registry to owning five preserves and holding 27 conservation easements. Our local efforts to protect nature contribute to better air and water and a more stable climate.

Living through the pandemic has helped us realize the importance of being outdoors. Experts have long known that time outdoors makes you happy and that spending just two hours a week in a natural environment such as a park or preserve boosts well being.

Thank you for attending our events, visiting our preserves and for contributing to the success of GLC. My wish for the coming year is for all of us to experience the healing powers of nature.

Cynthia Northup, Board President



GLC Glossary of Terms: Land Trust, Conservation Easement, Fee Simple Lands

By Abbey Vizelka, Land Project Manager

WE HAVE BEEN GROWING

our membership base and our constituency by leaps and bounds this past year. There have been so many wonderful new people getting involved with GLC that I would like to share some information about GLC using terms you will see and hear while interacting with the organization.

Land Trust. A land trust is a non-profit organization that owns and manages land to preserve and protect it in perpetuity. Land trust work areas can be very large - multiple counties or whole states, or very specific - like a watershed. GLC is a land trust, and we offer land conservation options, organizational support, and technical guidance to landowners and organizations in a five-county region: Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Kewaunee, Calumet, and Fond du Lac.

Conservation Easement. These properties are privately owned and managed. A legal agreement between the easement landowner and GLC defines permitted and prohibited uses for the property. Each agreement is created through a labor of love and is specific to that property. It is filed with the Registrar of Deeds and stays with the property, even after landowners change, devoting GLC to forever monitoring the property. GLC currently holds 27 conservation easements and is truly grateful for the opportunity to work with each of these properties.

Fee Simple Lands. These properties are owned and managed by the land trust, GLC. Each of these properties is cared for through a thoughtfully created management plan that is reviewed at least every five years to ensure the best-continued care of the property. All five of GLC's fee

simple lands are open to the public for low-impact recreation. Visitors are welcome to hike, snowshoe, bird watch, fish, and observe nature from the trails. To preserve the ongoing work on the properties, we ask visitors not to camp, build fires, ride ATVs, or drive on these properties.

Fee simple lands and conservation easement properties provide opportunities to protect our landscapes, wildlife, and natural resources.

The GLC website will have 2022 event announcements coming soon. Stay tuned for snow shoe mindfulness walks on GLC owned lands and educational winter walks on private GLC Conservation Easement properties for February and March. We can't wait to keep you connected and engaged on our special lands.

www.glaciallakes.org

October 9th 25th Anniversary celebration





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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.

Address Service Requested



Upcoming GLC Events:

SIXTH ANNUAL WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION

Tuesday, December 21, 2021 from 1:00 until sunset

Glacial Lakes Conservancy will once again be celebrating the Winter Solstice at Kay's Ledge located just east of Fond du Lac. This is a chance to take a break from the Holiday rush to get outside for a hike along the Niagara Escarpment or to enjoy conversation around a roaring campfire, a warm beverage, and a bowl of chili. The event will be held on Tuesday, December 21, 2021 from 1:00 until sunset.

More information can be found on GLC's website at www.glaciallakes.org. Registration is required for this FREE event. This is a fun event and we hope to see you there!

Board News

GLC thanks outgoing Board Members **Greg Zahn and Liz Victor** for their service. We wish them well in their future endeavors.

The Board annual retreat will be in January and we will review our mission and strategic plan.

The Board Development Committee is studying current skills on the Board and is seeking additional individuals who are passionate about conservation and nature. For information please contact Jennifer at info@glaciallakes.org
Jennifer Rutten
Executive Director

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

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