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Why I volunteer for Glacial Lakes Conservancy

by GLC Board Secretary
Sister Susan Seeby, CSA

GROWING UP IN THE EARLY 1960's, my family rented a home from a farmer. Located on the outskirts of the far southside of the Milwaukee area, we were surrounded by farmland and relatively untouched habitat. I spent many hours climbing trees, exploring woodlands, and playing along (and in) a creek that ran through the property. Some years later after we moved, and the farmer had passed away, the land was sold to developers. The last time I visited the place that nurtured my love of nature and creatures, it was a sprawling sub-division named "Creekside," although it would be extremely difficult to find what remains of the creek.

Fast forward to 2023. I am participating in a pollinator walk with members of Glacial Lakes Conservancy and others on one of the many land trust events sponsored by Glacial Lakes during Wisconsin Land Trust days. We are walking near a spring that runs through our Congregation of St. Agnes property. The Congregation's 230 acres on the Niagara Escarpment on the northwest side of Fond du Lac is protected by a Conservation Easement held by Glacial Lakes Conservancy.

As we make our way on the walk, I am totally immersed in the running commentary of our guide. Suddenly we see it! The Rusty Patched Bumble Bee! This Bee is extremely rare in Wisconsin and is considered both state and globally imperiled. Yet here it is, right in front of us, quietly humming around the beautiful native Jewelweed that grows on our land.



Sue Seeby enjoying and volunteering at our October 2022 event at Hunner Preserve.

The sound of the springs bubbling in the background, the warm sun, and the excitement of everyone on the walk at seeing this tiny creature affirmed for me our decision as a Congregation to place our land under protection forever. In my mind, I can envision another young child learning to love nature and creatures because this land will be there for them. I volunteer with Glacial lakes because land

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The biodiversity species crisis and GLC

By Gary S. Casper, Biologist, GLC Volunteer

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 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!

BIODIVERSITY BLOG 4: RICHNESS OF LIFE BEGINS AT HOME.

Our landscapes become flush with life as spring unfolds around us. This is a good time to reflect on how Glacial Lakes Conservancy helps preserve the living resources (biodiversity) in our communities. Our world is rapidly changing as a result of two inter-related crises: climate change and biodiversity loss. Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history, and this represents an existential threat to our livelihoods, food systems, and health. Floods, fire and famine are the obvious results that are already here. Yet in Wisconsin we mostly read about these crises in the news, and feel their effects only marginally in our pocketbooks. This is because we are the richest nation on Earth and can absorb a lot of loss, and we happen to live in the western Great Lakes region, which is the most climate stable place on the continent. Unlike our friends on the coasts and further north, we are not seeing floods, droughts, fire and melting tundra directly destroy our infrastructure, agriculture, homes, and fish and wildlife populations.

We are, however, starting to see effects such as insect infestations that rage out of control because of mild winters (Emerald Ash Borer), species moving northward (Connecticut Warbler), and diseases such as



Wood Thrush and Western Blacknose Dace are rare in Sheboygan and became Focal Species at the Willow Creek Preserve (photos from coniferousforest.com and marylandbiodiversity.com, respectively)

avian influenza and white-nose syndrome impacting our bird and bat communities.

Much is happening to invest in climate change resiliency. Getting less attention but equally important is the biodiversity crisis. Both the abundance and richness of life in our region are declining, with many animals such as Brook Trout and Elk now at only a fraction of their historic abundance, and others now extinct (Longjaw Cisco). The main reasons are a changing climate, non-native invasive species that crowd out native biodiversity, and habitat loss and fragmentation. Native species losses in some Wisconsin counties already exceed 50% – this is not just happening in the tropics but here at home.

There is much that can be done to prevent further losses and restore the richness of life in our communities. It starts with identifying the problems, then tackling them head on. This blog has highlighted a number of GLC studies on the Willow Creek Preserve to do just that – identify what is impaired and how to fix it. The new

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conservation, education about nature, and the peace and joy that come from being connected with the land are truly a birthright of future generations. The simple act of watching a tiny bee moving from flower to flower is a priceless gift for anyone graced to experience it.

Without entities like Glacial Lakes, the memories of future generations will be devoid of these experiences. I am grateful for the small part that I am able to play in assisting Glacial Lakes in its mission.

Land Management Plan goes into great detail on this.

The Land Management Plan utilizes a concept termed “Species of Local Conservation Interest” or SLCI. This methodology assesses biodiversity at local and regional scales, identifying the species in conservation need and their habitat requirements. In other words – what is rare here and how can we help. It was developed for the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern and is utilized by area land trusts and county parks departments to better steward our natural resources. It goes way beyond simply using the state endangered species list, instead identifying what species are impaired on a specific landscape – the communities we actually live in. At the Willow Creek Preserve, the SLCI methodology identified over 50 species in need, most of which were previously unknown on the property and are now being planned for, such as Wood Thrush and Western Blacknose Dace. Identifying these species helps GLC be a responsible steward of our natural resources, helping local species survive and thrive so our grandchildren can also see them, and so ecosystems can function with all parts intact. GLC is continuing to identify rare species at its preserves and give them a helping hand. Members are more than welcome to volunteer and assist with fish and wildlife surveys.

How Glacial Lakes Conservancy helps bird habitat and bird survival

by GLC volunteer and intern Jack Coulter



Participants of the GLC 2022 Birdathon team document species on a GLC Conservation

MILLIONS OF BIRDS migrate across Wisconsin every spring, and the bulk of this migration happens during May. As they move from their southerly wintering grounds to their breeding territories in the north, these birds depend on suitable stopover habitat, which has declined in quantity and quality in recent decades. Land trusts like GLC play a critical role in protecting these spaces and maintaining their usefulness for migrating birds.

Most songbirds migrate at night, leaving one stopover site after the sun sets, flying throughout the night, and then choosing a new stopover site as the sun begins to rise. Each bird species has preferences for specific habitat types used while migrating, and the portfolio of properties under GLC's protection offers various habitat types. Though sometimes, the type of habitat found in a particular location is less important. Point Creek, nestled along the Lake Michigan shoreline, is a critical beacon of trees for birds that might find themselves over the water as the sun rises. Desperate to rest, these birds

will gravitate towards the first piece of habitat they can spot, especially when facing headwinds during poor weather. This phenomenon is known among birders as "fallout," and while it's a treat to see so many birds in one spot, it is a tremendously stressful experience for the birds themselves.

Other GLC properties provide more niche habitats for specialist species. Willow Creek Preserve is an urban oasis for birds migrating through the City of Sheboygan and a haven for grassland birds like

Savannah Sparrows and marsh birds like Virginia Rail. Another GLC property that supports birds of open grassland and marshland is Spring Preserve, just outside Manitowoc. Spring Preserve's extensive open habitat supports lots of sparrows, blackbirds, flycatchers, and meadowlarks. Many birds also depend on tracts of quality woodland, which can be found at places like Bur Oak Preserve in Sheboygan County and Hunner Preserve in Kewaunee County. These woodlands support a myriad of colorful birds like warblers, tanagers, and buntings that migrate long distances from their wintering grounds in Central and South America, as well as shorter-distance migrants like woodpeckers and robins.

There are many ways you can help support GLC's endeavors to help birds as they migrate through our area and beyond. Later this spring, GLC will conduct a Birdathon, where volunteers will spend a day trying to find as many species of birds as possible on public GLC preserves and private conservation easements. Your contributions will support GLC

Board News

GLC welcomes two new Board members. Richard Wirtz is a Plymouth based attorney specializing in real estate law. Joshua Lundgren-Dolan owns Velvet Sheep Farm, a wool fiber farm and Bed and Breakfast in Sheboygan County. They both bring their passion for nature to help further the mission of GLC.

The Board has started work on the strategic plan to guide us for the next three years. Preview: GLC will continue to highlight Willow Creek Preserve and update land management plans for our other four preserves. We will work to protect more high quality natural land in the five counties we serve.

GLC continues to recruit for new Board members. If you are interested or know someone who may be a good fit please email jennifer@glaciallakes.org.

and the Wisconsin Natural Resources Foundation's Bird Protection Fund.

We also welcome anyone interested in volunteering to help us maintain our properties through periodic workdays and other maintenance activities. Finally, we encourage everyone to observe the birds at each of our properties. When you do, we ask that you submit your observations to eBird, a free site by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that keeps track of your bird sightings and allows scientists and property managers at GLC to analyze data from sightings to track trends and make informed land management decisions that factor in the birds.

The Forever Business of Land Protection

By Isabel Mueller and Miriam Headrick

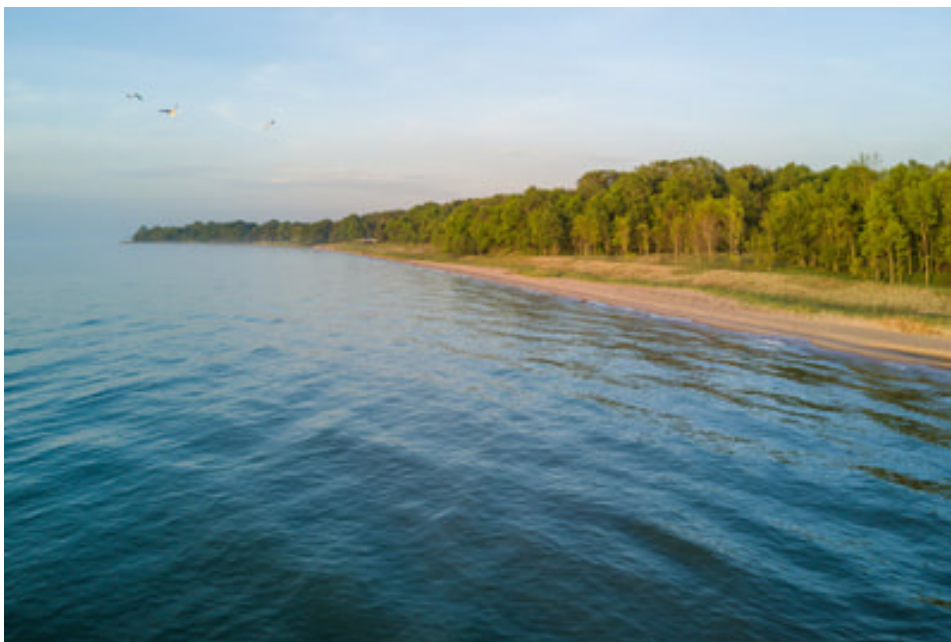
YOU WILL OFTEN HEAR GLACIAL LAKES CONSERVANCY cite the fact that we are in the forever business of land conservation. This is because of Conservation Easements. So what is a conservation easement exactly?

Conservation easements are voluntary, forever legal contracts between Landowner and Land Conservancy that focus on protecting the natural character of any given property. Conservation easements do not simply restrict what can be done on the land (i.e. development, farming, dumping); they also establish customized management and maintenance activities consistent with the protection of the properties conservation resources, as well as the land owner's visions for the property.

Each conservation easement



Willows at Cascade Conservation Easement aerial photos (2001) (photo held by Glacial Lakes Conservancy)



Amsterdam Dunes Conservation Easement held by Glacial Lakes Conservancy since 2015 (photo from <https://www.glaciallakes.org>)

is drafted on a per-property basis following strict guidelines from Land Trust Alliance, the national leader in land trust policy, standards, education and

training. Writing up a conservation easement is done with the help of the land trust staff, a land trust lawyer, the landowner and their family/partners accompanied often by a separate lawyer.

While the process may seem challenging, establishing land in a conservation easement holds many benefits for the land and the landowner.

By putting land into a conservation easement, landowners are, first and foremost, forever protecting their property against anything they do not wish to see happen on the land. This includes activities and projects while they own it, if the land is sold, or if it is passed down to future generations. The conservation easement will always stand to protect landowners' desires for the land as well as its natural resources. This alone retains the sentimental value of the property and can keep family stories and memories constantly preserved in the land.

Along with benefits for the land, conservation easements

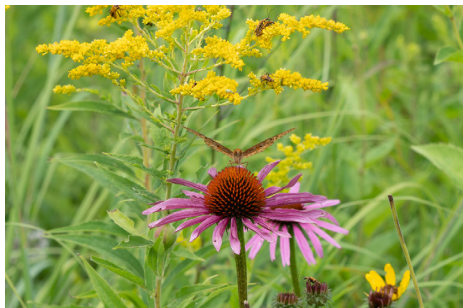
The Forever Business
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have benefits regarding taxation. Typically, conservation easements reduce or eliminate development potential for any given land, resulting in decreased value and taxes on the property. In Addition, the landowner's accountant or lawyer can determine if the conservation easement can qualify as a tax-deductible charitable donation that can reduce a landowner's state and federal income taxes. But most of all, conservation easements maintain and protect land, *forever!*

GLC is a non-profit land trust. Being a land trust means that along with the protection and maintenance of our five owned preserves, we also put together and oversee conservation easements. Glacial Lakes Conservancy currently protects over 2,000 acres of land and holds 28 conservation easements. In the coming year, GLC is looking to close three more conservation easements within our five-county operating region, adding nearly 400 acres to our conservation reach.

If you know any landowners who may be interested in forever protecting their land, we'd be happy to assist! Feel free to reach out to either of our Land Project Coordinators, Miriam Headrick (miriam@glaciallakes.org) or Isabel Mueller (isabel@glaciallakes.org).



Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes Conservation Easement.

Upcoming GLC Events:



GLC Online Auction

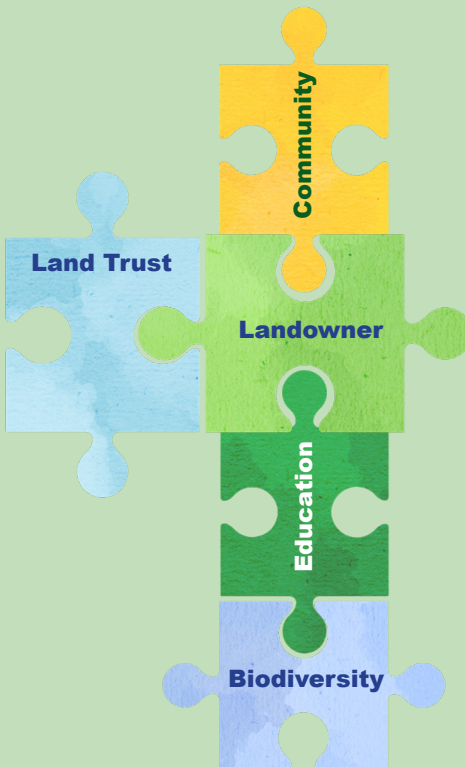
June 3rd - June 11th: Our online Auction is back! Bid and win exciting experience packages, one of a kind items, art, all while supporting our area small businesses. Over 100 items!

Land Trust Days

Save the Date for our summer and fall Land Trust Days: explore public and private GLC lands with fun activities like astronomy, yoga, nature journaling and painting and special guided hikes. July through September. For more information go to: <https://www.glaciallakes.org/events.html>

Conservation and Connection Fundraiser

at GLC Conservation Easement in Fond du Lac
Saturday September 9th, 11-3 p.m.



Join GLC at our Conservation Easement in Fond du Lac, the Congregation Sisters of St. Agnes for a day of "Conservation Connection." The day will have a special speaker, lunch, unique raffles, guided nature hike and nature activity tables! This event will be ticketed (it's a fundraiser!). For more information, go to: <https://www.glaciallakes.org/events.html>.



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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



Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes Conservation Easement. Founded 2022, 237 acres



Manitou Maples Conservation Easement. Drohman, Founded 2011, 58 acres

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

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Isabel Mueller	Martha Schott
Cynthia Northup	Jack Coulter
Sister Susan Seeby	Miriam Headrick