

Journal of the Door County Land Trust

LANDINGS

NEWS SPLASH

Summer 2023, Vol. 26, Issue 2



Rooting for the Future!

- New Nature Preserve
- Peace Found on DCLT Trails
- What's the Buzz?
- From Grassroots to Cultivated Growth



Chambers Island Celebration

Photos by Kay McKinley

On July 15, Chambers Island residents and DCLT staff gathered to bury a time capsule and toast the Chambers Island Nature Preserve. To the delight of all ages, ice cream (courtesy of Door County Ice Cream Factory) was served.



Trail Mix

Trail Mix features notes and photos from Land Trust supporters. It takes a community to protect Door County's exceptional lands and waters! Send your images and comments to photos@DoorCountyLandTrust.org.



Jack-in-the-pulpit photo by David Heilman

American Redstart
photo by Emily Wood



We witnessed an explosion of baby tree frogs on the trail [Ephraim Nature Preserve at Anderson Pond]! We wish to thank all the donors and volunteers who allow us to enjoy your "hidden gems".

Thank you!
Jim and Patricia
Nevins-Merriman

Excellent job!
Keep up the great work, and thank you for all you do!
- Jo Sedar



Heins Creek Nature Preserve photo by Emily Wood

I have high respect for all the staff and volunteers who, in my mind, have an expectation of excellence for all the lands and waters we love. -Barbara Zettel

Following our Trails?  
Follow us on Facebook & Instagram!
Find links at DoorCountyLandTrust.org

A Letter from the Executive Director

Join DCLT IN Rooting FOR THE Future

Summers are made for days at the beach and ballgames. Around the county, parks are filled with song lyrics, like “Root, root, root for the home team!” Door County Land Trust adopted the mantra earlier this year—but our home team is the land and water that encompasses the Door Peninsula and its islands.

Door County Land Trust’s conservation work began in 1986 with a small but passionate team of volunteers and fans. Back-to-back home runs in 1996 created the iconic Kangaroo Lake Nature Preserve and the Bay Shore Blufflands Nature Preserve.

One might say that Door County Land Trust hit one out of the park with nature preserves containing miles of hiking trails. The Land Trust protects the peninsula’s important land, water, and wild creatures. Many of these lands are free and open to the public for not only hiking, but wildlife observation and other environmentally friendly activities.

These things are not just the accomplishments of the Door County Land Trust—they are made possible because of your support, participation, and encouragement.

On the edge of these Great Lakes, we’re all connected by water. With hundreds of miles of shoreline and beautiful beaches for swimming and playing, with wetlands that filter our groundwater and feed into streams and bays—water is the very thing that makes Door County such a wonderful place to live and to vacation.

Conservation efforts on the Door Peninsula and its islands today profoundly change the outlook for the county’s waters, wildlife, and



Kay McKinley photo

people. The reason to protect each wilderness, forest, stream, and shoreline is why we “root, root, root” for Door County’s lands and waters. That’s what rooting for the future is all about.

Door County Land Trust needs you to step up to the plate to hit another home run—to complete the purchase of a property that will become a new nature preserve. This property has a rare, diverse landscape that future generations will thank today’s supporters for having the foresight to protect.

Enclosed in the center of this issue is an envelope to help support Door County Land Trust’s ‘Rooting for the Future’ campaign. Send in your donation to complete another home run—a new nature preserve and hundreds more acres of protected land.

Door County’s protected lands and waters are thanks to you, the fans of Door County. It’s an active fan club—built with conservation partners, landowners, members, volunteers, and the community. You make the Door County Land Trust stronger!

The next time you hear the shouts of the crowd, remember your home team is Door County. It’s only with your support that we can score a victory for the conservation of Door County’s lands and waters.

Yours in conservation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Emily".

Emily Wood, Executive Director



Door County Land Trust

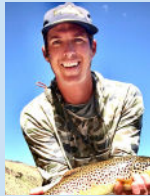
We are the
Door County
Land Trust



Jesse Koyen



Brian Forest



Drew Reinke



Terrie Cooper



Carrie
Ehrfurth



Tina Lee



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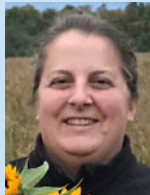
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Protect Door County's exceptional lands and waters today...
and every day thereafter.

Make your first-time donation of \$100 or more and receive a free 'Rooting for the Future' t-shirt with our thanks. **Offer applies to first-time donors and is good through 10/15/2023.**



Bumper to Bumper Love for Door County!

Show a little love for Door County! When you donate to the Land Trust's 2023 Rooting for the Future campaign, you'll receive a free bumper sticker. Display your sticker proudly and show the world that you've helped protect Door County's exceptional lands and waters...forever. **Offer applies to all donors and is good through 10/15/2023.**



Show your support for the Land Trust with branded merchandise!

Proudly display your dedication to conservation with items sold on
our website. Visit doorcountylantrust.org/gift-shop



From Grassroots...

A donor database handwritten on recipe cards in a shoebox, a home basement for an office, and a newly appointed executive director as employee number one—these describe the workings of the Door County Land Trust (DCLT) in its infancy in the 1990s.

This is a big contrast to today's Land Trust that employs 13 people, many of whom oversee more than 9,100 acres of protected land from their base at the Epicenter Building in downtown Sturgeon Bay.

But there's more to the backstory. It's a story that involves a community's deeds and donations to support the passion of protecting Door County's exceptional lands and waters.

The Land Trust was established first as the Door County Land Trustees in 1986 after volunteers from the Door County Environmental Council attended the first meeting of regional land trusts in Washington, D.C. It was there they were instructed in how to establish a local land trust in Door County. That same year, Baileys Harbor landowner Ruth Neuman put her faith in the fledgling organization and donated a 115-acre conservation easement agreement to the Land Trustees. DCLT had secured its first property.

By 1995, the organization made their first land purchase of 60 acres at the north end of Kangaroo Lake in partnership with The Nature Conservancy. Dan Burke, a volunteer board member at the time, became its first paid Executive Director.

In 1997, the Door County Land Trustees became the Door County Land Trust. Two years later, current Senior Land Protection Manager Terrie Cooper became the second employee whose focus was on fundraising and memberships.

At that time, Dan and Terrie worked out of their homes, doing bulk mailings from coffee shops and park shelters. Moving up meant setting up shop in a tiny \$150-a-month rental behind what is now Door County Brewery in



Ruth Neuman (in hat) joins the Land Trustees at the first conservation easement.

Baileys Harbor. "I worried so much about that \$150 a month," Terrie said. "I'd think, 'Do we have enough cash coming in?'" I opened the mail

every day knowing we needed X amount of dollars to get through. It was very grassroots."

The hardscrabble life of a new nonprofit was offset by a collaboration with local environmental groups and state agencies that it continues to enjoy today.

Among the early collaborators, The Nature Conservancy and WI-DNR helped identify focus areas for early



**Door County Land Trust
Nature Preserves 2023**
See the complete map at
doorcountylandtrust.org/preserves

...To Cultivated Growth

projects and obtain grant funding. Funds from the WI-DNR Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Green Bay and Fox River Natural Resources Damage Assessment funds were of particular importance.

"The Land Trust would not be where it is today if we weren't working with these kind of partnerships," Terrie said. "That's a huge part of our success."

Community support is essential to land protection. Member donations fund more than 85% of program and operational costs each year. Private donations and community support typically fund 50%-80% of the costs of acquiring and permanently protecting land.

The Land Trust is the only organization in Door County with the scope to protect the peninsula's lands and waters on a large scale. Committed to protecting these special properties in perpetuity, DCLT cares for protected lands by preserving and improving wildlife habitat, forests, wetlands, and other ecologically sensitive areas.

That commitment extends to 14 nature preserves where wildlife and visitors can sustainably co-exist to enjoy the benefits of nature.

As for the future, the Land Trust is making a concerted effort to look at the needs of the county overall to tend to places that are in critical need of protection. The momentum continues with projects underway, including the creation of the Land Trust's 15th nature preserve located in Southern Door at Bear Creek.



New Preserve to Deliver Drama

Article by Kay McKinley / Photos by Carrie Erhfurth

It's hard for the Door County Land Trust Land Team to temper their excitement when describing the property slated for the Land Trust's fifteenth nature preserve. "It's spectacular," said Land Program Director Jesse Koyen. "Over a half mile of Bear Creek and its surrounding forested banks make up the heart of the property. There are beautiful, scenic vistas of mixed open grasslands and forests with 50' high ancient hills."

The rare diversity of the landscape occurs within the preserve's 75 acres that lie just over half a mile from Lake Michigan's shoreline in southeastern Door County. Approximately 30 acres of forested wetland lies within its center.

specifically, the diverse species list of flora and fauna includes neotropical warblers, yellow birch and mountain maple, and six-foot-tall ostrich ferns.

Just over a half mile from Lake Michigan, the creek provides a spawning site for trout.

"Protecting land around a stream or wetland corridor is one of the best ways to ensure our watersheds remain healthy," said Executive Director Emily Wood. "These areas act as a buffer zone that can slow, filter, and clean surface water before it hits the lake."

The future vision for the property could take multiple years to complete. "The intent is to install a parking lot and kiosk, more than two miles of trails, two

"We tend to think of Door County bluffs as having these dramatic views and not the county's interior land. It's like going into a little Appalachian valley." - Senior Land Protection Manager, Terrie Cooper

"There are some really big, old-growth cedars and hardwood trees growing on the stream banks and magnificent overlooks down into the stream valley," said Senior Land Protection Manager Terrie Cooper. "We tend to think of Door County bluffs as having these dramatic views and not the county's interior land. It's like going into a little Appalachian valley."

The beauty of the proposed nature preserve is equal to its ecological significance. Its varied environments currently supply habitats for a range of species, including migratory birds and fish, and grassland and wetland breeding birds. More

scenic overlooks, and wetland boardwalks," Jesse said. "A few small fields will be restored and planted with trees, while other fields will be maintained for grasslands with specific birds and pollinators in mind."

The overlooks will take advantage of the view into the deep-cut valley with Bear Creek and its banks, as well as the panoramic vista from atop a hill overlooking grasslands. An important aspect of the infrastructure is that the Land Trust is looking into making as much of the trail ADA accessible as possible. A boardwalk will allow hikers to cross Bear Creek. Working with WI-DNR, the trails, boardwalks,



and overlooks will be carefully planned to protect wetlands and ecological features of the land.

Bear Creek Nature Preserve will supply visitors the opportunities for activities such as hiking, cross-country skiing, and fishing, and especially bird-watching, photography, and wildlife observation.

It's been over a decade since the Land Trust considered one of their properties for a nature preserve. The last one being Heins Creek Nature Preserve in Baileys Harbor.

According to Jesse, before an area is chosen for nature preserve use, many questions must be answered. Among them: Can the property and habitat accommodate necessary infrastructure? Is it large enough for visitors to spend a good amount of time? And lastly, are there other conservation lands nearby?

"In this case, we were conscious of less conservation land being open to the community in Southern Door and we wanted to provide that opportunity in this area," Jesse said.

To create the new Bear Creek Nature Preserve, the Land Trust must raise the funds to purchase the property, which DCLT optimistically hopes to complete in October 2023. Other expenses for the new nature preserve include robust plans for public recreation and funds for the long-term management of the preserve. Once trails, boardwalks, and overlooks are completed, staff and volunteers will continue the ongoing care of the trails and wildlife observation areas.



Peace Found ON DCLT Trails

Patricia and Jim Merriman have repeatedly hiked Door County Land Trust nature preserves since the opening of the first preserve at Kangaroo Lake in 1995. Despite their familiarity, the retired landscape architect and his artist wife approach each hike with the enthusiasm and curiosity of experiencing nature's gifts for the first time.

Hiking with the couple is a lesson in plant identification and the wonder of spotting wildlife as they alert each other to treasures they discover along the trails.

Jim and Patricia are as passionate about Land Trust properties as they are with preserving their shared family land on the shore of Kangaroo Lake. So much so that when asked about their favorite preserve, they would only smile and refer to it as Monarch Park, named for their favorite butterfly. "We have one, but we don't want to say what it is and why; we hate to attract attention," Jim said. "It's not very populated."

The peace of nature keeps the couple returning to Land Trust trails. "You can take your time," Patricia said. "We might go just halfway in and just stand there to watch the monarchs, or maybe there's a trillium patch. You don't feel hurried because there aren't any bicycles or people running by. It's more personal, quiet."

Jim's reverence for the preserves stems in part from his environmental work for the Wisconsin DOT out



Patricia and Jim Merriman

of Madison. He helped restore a number of wetlands and prairies through partnerships with wildlife and conservation groups. His report card for the design of the DCLT preserves? "Less is more," he says, when referring to infrastructure for visitors. "The Land Trust is doing a bang-up job."

Despite being surrounded by nature on 25 acres they own in Fort Atkinson—where they spend their time when not in Door County—Jim emphasizes how the differences in environments make the Land Trust preserves special. "Door County was a mix of conifers, hardwoods, and northern boreal, hardwood forest," he said. "In pre-settlement times, the Madison area was a mix of prairies, savannahs, wetlands, and tamarack bogs. The spring ephemerals up here are rare, unique to Door County. They are fantastic."

Kellner Fen Addition Extends Protection OF Rare Species

The Door County Land Trust recently purchased 63 acres that will extend the protection of water quality and wildlife surrounding the organization's Kellner Fen Natural Area, located near the Lake Michigan shoreline north of Sturgeon Bay. Kellner Fen is a unique type of wetland that features a large expanse of open water and an extensive, fragile sedge mat that floats on top of the underlying water.

This recent addition to the natural area provides an opportunity to increase the protection of several rare species in an equally rare habitat, including carnivorous plants like pitcher plants. The fen and its surrounding dense forests provide refuge and foraging opportunities for migratory and nesting birds. It's also the habitat of choice for unusual species of insects like the Hine's emerald dragonfly.

"This land acquisition supports the Land Trust's continuing goals to protect the water quality of wetlands, coastal ridge and swale complexes, contiguous forest

canopy and biodiversity, and migratory corridors," said Land Program Director Jesse Koyen.



Rare species at Kellner Fen include dragon's mouth orchids.

The success of the purchase is the direct result of the generosity of the Fischer family. Xan and John Fischer of Sturgeon Bay made a significant donation in their family's name to contribute to any expansion of the Kellner Fen Natural Area and its permanent protection. Then, last fall the couple set the Land Trust's Fischer Challenge campaign in motion to entice the community to match their gift and contribute funds for other conservation projects around the county. Hundreds

of donors matched—and then exceeded—the Fischer family's original challenge.

The Door County Land Trust would like to thank Xan and John Fischer for their generous donation to protect Kellner Fen and for sparking the Fischer Challenge to protect more of Door County.

Long Live Your Legacy— & DOOR COUNTY'S BEAUTIFUL LANDS & WATERS

Join the Legacy Circle.

Door County Land Trust relies on community support to protect the beauty and ecology of the Door Peninsula, its islands, and surrounding waters. Thousands of people contribute each year to protect the county's lands and waters. Among these generous members, there are those who have planned a gift to the Land Trust through their will or retirement account. To show our appreciation, these generous members are recognized in Door County Land Trust's Legacy Circle. These future gifts or bequests will help preserve a legacy of land forever.

When you include the Land Trust in your will and join the Legacy Circle, \$1,000 will be donated in your honor! There's no better time to begin your will or refresh your existing plans by including a charitable provision for Door County Land Trust.

To kick off the Land Trust's Legacy Circle Challenge, two generous couples, Barb and Brad Nikles and Rick and Barbara Frank, have created a challenge grant of \$45,000. When you join the Land Trust's Legacy Circle, \$1,000 will be donated to the Land Acquisition Fund in your honor. This means your future commitment to saving land can help right now!

Join this dedicated group of land protectors today!

Making your legacy with a charitable donation that helps the natural lands on our peninsula is easier than you might imagine. The simplest way is to name the Door County Land Trust as one of the beneficiaries of your retirement accounts or your life insurance. Planning a bequest in your will or trust can be as easy as asking your attorney to include a provision for the Door County Land Trust.

Joining the Legacy Circle Challenge is as simple as informing us of your charitable gift plans. To participate in the Legacy Circle Challenge, please fill out the 'Note of Intent' online at DoorCountyLandTrust.org/Legacy. You may choose to keep your name anonymous, but



Barbara and Rick Frank



Kay McKinley photo

Barb and Brad Nikles

informing us of your charitable gift plans allows us to thank you—and a \$1,000 donation to the Land Acquisition Fund will be given in your honor!

No matter the size of your gift, we can help you create a legacy that lasts forever. Ask us how. For more information contact Cinnamon Rossman, Director of Charitable Giving, at (920) 746-1027 or giving@doorcountylandtrust.org.

Door County Land Trust has set in place an organizational foundation for perpetuity so you can trust your legacy will live on forever. Door County Land Trust is accredited by the national Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission. Read more about our commitment to preserve land forever at www.DoorCountyLandTrust.org/forever.

WHAT'S THE BUZZ? FIELD NOTES

Operation Budburst

There was a hive of volunteer activity at the Sturgeon Bay Ship Canal Nature Preserve this summer. Land Trust citizen science volunteers took to the dunes to record pollinator visits to flowering plants. The observations—done in cooperation with the Chicago Botanical Garden's (CBG) Budburst project—were an effort to document the dune plants that provide the greatest benefit to the dune ecology and the survival of the federally threatened Pitcher's dune thistle (*Cirsium pitcheri*). Without this thistle, the remaining dune ecology would be threatened due to the loss of pollinators that directly affect seed production.

Thirty-three volunteers recorded their observations of 550 pollinator visits, with the majority being those of various bee species.

Flowering plant observations are timed to 10 minutes each to record the number and type of pollinators that visit a bloom. Also noted are environmental conditions, plant height, phenological stage, and number of open flowers on the plant. Once observations are completed, data is submitted to the Budburst website to be available to scientists for research or curious community members.

"There are not many places like the Ship Canal landscape left," said Community Conservation Coordinator Paige Witek. "To see volunteers looking closer to observe what often goes unnoticed brought the CBG researchers and me such joy."

Budburst pollinator observations will continue on the dunes next year.

A Towering Achievement

It took only two weeks for the first Motus telemetry tower to be installed in Door County to track its first bird—a short-billed Dowitcher from northwest Manitoba.

Motus is shorthand for Motus Wildlife Tracking System. Placed at the Domer-Neff Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary on Washington Island on July 6, the tower is part of an internationally collaborative



BUDBURST



MOTUS TOWER

system that allows researchers to study what has previously remained a mystery—the movements of numerous species of birds, bats, and insects over great distances.

Motus uses nanotransmitter tags, which are small enough to fit on large insects like monarch butterflies and dragonflies. Once an organism has been tagged, it can be detected as it passes by any tower or station in the network, be it on Washington Island or anywhere else in the world.

Information that reveals their migratory path through the peninsula combined with other data that shows population growth or decline, can help determine which types of land must be protected by the Land Trust for the survival of certain species of birds.

Banding Together

Scientists are worried. Although the American Kestrel population is still the greatest of any raptor in North America, their 50% decline since the 1970s, and lack of concrete data as to why, is cause for concern.

In support of getting answers, the Land Trust enlisted the aid of USFWS raptor ecologist, Joel "Jeep" Pagel, Ph.D., to band American Kestrel nestlings at DCLT preserves. Assisted by staff members of the DCLT Land Team, Dr. Pagel banded the nestlings in June before they fledged. Bird banding and tracking helps to identify key locations where conservation is needed most.

The Land Trust also monitors multiple nest boxes on DCLT preserves to see how many chicks successfully hatch and fledge. These efforts are a part of the American Kestrel Partnership, an international collaboration of community and professional scientists working to better understand kestrel demographics and advance kestrel conservation.



A newly banded chick.



Ecological Restoration Specialist Tina Lee

Events

Workdays • Hikes • Special Events • Citizen Science

August 15th, 9-11 am
Stewardship Workday
Oak Road Nature Preserve

August 17th, 1-3 pm
Look a Little Closer: Insect
Exploration at Oak Road
Oak Road Nature Preserve
Free

August 19th, 9-11 am
Look a Little Closer: Insect
Exploration at Oak Road
Oak Road Nature Preserve
Free

August 25th, 2-5pm
Annual Gathering
Tickets:
[doorcountylandtrust.org/
gathering](http://doorcountylandtrust.org/gathering)

August 31st, 1-3 pm
Tapping Into Your Senses with
Gretchen Schmelzer
Lautenbach Woods Nature
Preserve
Free

Sept. 16th, 9-11 am
Creation of a Nature Preserve
with Terrie Cooper & Marilyn
Hansotia
Three Springs Nature
Preserve
Free

Sept. 19th, TBD
Stewardship Workday
Washington Island

Sept. 21st, 1-3 pm
The Fungus Amongst Us: Fall
Fungi and Mushrooms Hike
with Charlotte Lukes
Lautenbach Woods Nature
Preserve
\$10, Members Only

Oct. 5th, 10-11am
Chinook Salmon Hatchery Tour
with DNR Fisheries Staff
Strawberry Creek Chinook
Salmon Facility (adjacent
to Sturgeon Bay Ship Canal
Nature Preserve)
\$10, Open to all

Oct. 14th, 9-11 am
Fall for Autumn Foliage with
Jane Whitney
Kangaroo Lake Nature
Preserve
Free

Oct. 17th, TBD
Stewardship Workday
Legacy Nature Preserve
at Clay Banks

Please register for ALL events online
at doorcountylandtrust.org/events.

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True North Real Estate
Wagon Trail Campground
Washington Island Ferry Line



Door County Land Trust

Protecting Door County's Exceptional Lands and Waters...Forever

(920) 746-1359 • www.DoorCountyLandTrust.org

PO Box 65, Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235

ANNUAL GATHERING 2023



August 25, 2pm - 5pm

Belgian Heritage Center, Brussels

- CAMARADERIE • MUSEUM TOUR • FINE ART AUCTION
- PICNIC & DESSERT BUFFET • LIVE MUSIC: CARAVAN GYPSY SWING ENSEMBLE

Tickets available online at DoorCountyLandTrust.org/gathering