

Thumb Land Conservancy NEWS

December 23, 2017

Thumb Land Conservancy News 2018 June 21 William Collins, Executive Director Thumb Land Conservancy

Today is the longest day of the year. Winter starts setting-in tomorrow.

2018 Saint Clair County Earth Fair Goodells County Park Wales Township, Saint Clair County

The TLC again participated in the Saint Clair County Earth Fair on April 27 and April 28. Thanks to TLC board members Kay Cumbow and Dan Rhein for representing us at our table and for their displays. Thanks also to Fred Fuller for playing the part of famous Port Huron botanist of a century ago, Charles K. Dodge. The TLC was happy to again have the company of our partner organization at the adjacent table, the Clyde Historical Society ([facebook.com/groups/1481890455361159/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1481890455361159/)).



Fred Fuller as Port Huron botanist Charles K. Dodge. Perhaps Dodge is the Dr. Who of the botanical world.

This one looks like you better know the Latin names of every plant species or you'll get hit with a stick.

Fred did a great job, as did Al Lewandowski last year. Who's next?



TLC board member Dan Rhein and his carving of a Pileated Woodpecker. I'm not sure if the woodpecker thinks Dan is a dead tree or he has bugs in his pocket. Being a very generous person, Dan later gave this carving to the Clyde Historical Society as a reminder of all the Pileated Woodpeckers that can be found out in the Port Huron State Game Area. They were very pleased to receive Dan's gift.

May – June TLC Stewardship

May and June have been very busy for invasive weed control. See our schedule below.

- May 12 – Dead End Woods Garlic Mustard pull
- May 19 – Dead End Woods Garlic Mustard pull
- May 26 – Port Huron State Game Area Garlic Mustard pull
- June 02 – Deerfield Japanese barberry burning
- June 03 – Deerfield Japanese barberry burning
- June 06 – Dead End Woods Garlic Mustard pull and burn

We started burning invasive Japanese Barberry on the Deerfield Preserve in Huron County in early June. Our new propane weed torches have proven to be very effective tools. We even torched a few patches of Garlic Mustard in the Dead End Woods. These torches extend our

spring Garlic Mustard control season as we can now attack seed heads, fallen seed, and seedlings through the summer.

Thanks to all who have helped, especially Jim Bearss of the Clyde Historical Society and Pheasants Forever, Connie Bates of the Clyde Historical Society, TLC board members Dorothy Craig, Kay Cumbow, and Dan Rhein, John Darling of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and Jimmy Rankin's Meat Market on Lapeer Road in Port Huron Township (jimrankinmeats.com) for donating hotdogs.

Thanks also to Bob Gross of the Port Huron Times Herald for featuring our May 26 Port Huron State Game Area Garlic Mustard pull:

<https://www.thetimesherald.com/story/news/local/2018/05/26/volunteers-yank-invasive-weed/647418002/>



Jim Bearss and Connie Bates of the Clyde Historical Society at our May 26 Port Huron State Game Area Garlic Mustard pull.



Part of our May 26 Garlic Mustard removal area in the Port Huron State Game Area.

**Deerfield Wind Energy Preserve Stewardship
Huron Township
Huron County**

After hand-cutting about 2 acres of invasive Japanese Barberry on the Deerfield Preserve last summer and fall, it was time for burning the new shoots this spring. We got to it on June 02 and 03 and made great progress thanks to our new propane weed torches. As I said, they are very effective tools for invasive weed control. The 3-inch flame head on each torch allows good coverage with a flame that can be adjusted in length and intensity. It can be difficult to lug a full 20-gallon propane tank through the woods, but it gets easier as the propane is used up. A full tank lasts for about 6 hours of continuous burning. A nice benefit is that the tank builds up a layer of frost caused by the cooling effect of the propane discharge, so when you get too hot and sweaty, just hug the tank. I suppose refreshing beverages could be mounted on the tank as well. We have roughly 70% of the new barberry shoots burned in the main occurrence area. I think we are well on our way to eliminating barberry on the Deerfield Preserve.



Burning a typical clump of new Japanese Barberry shoots.

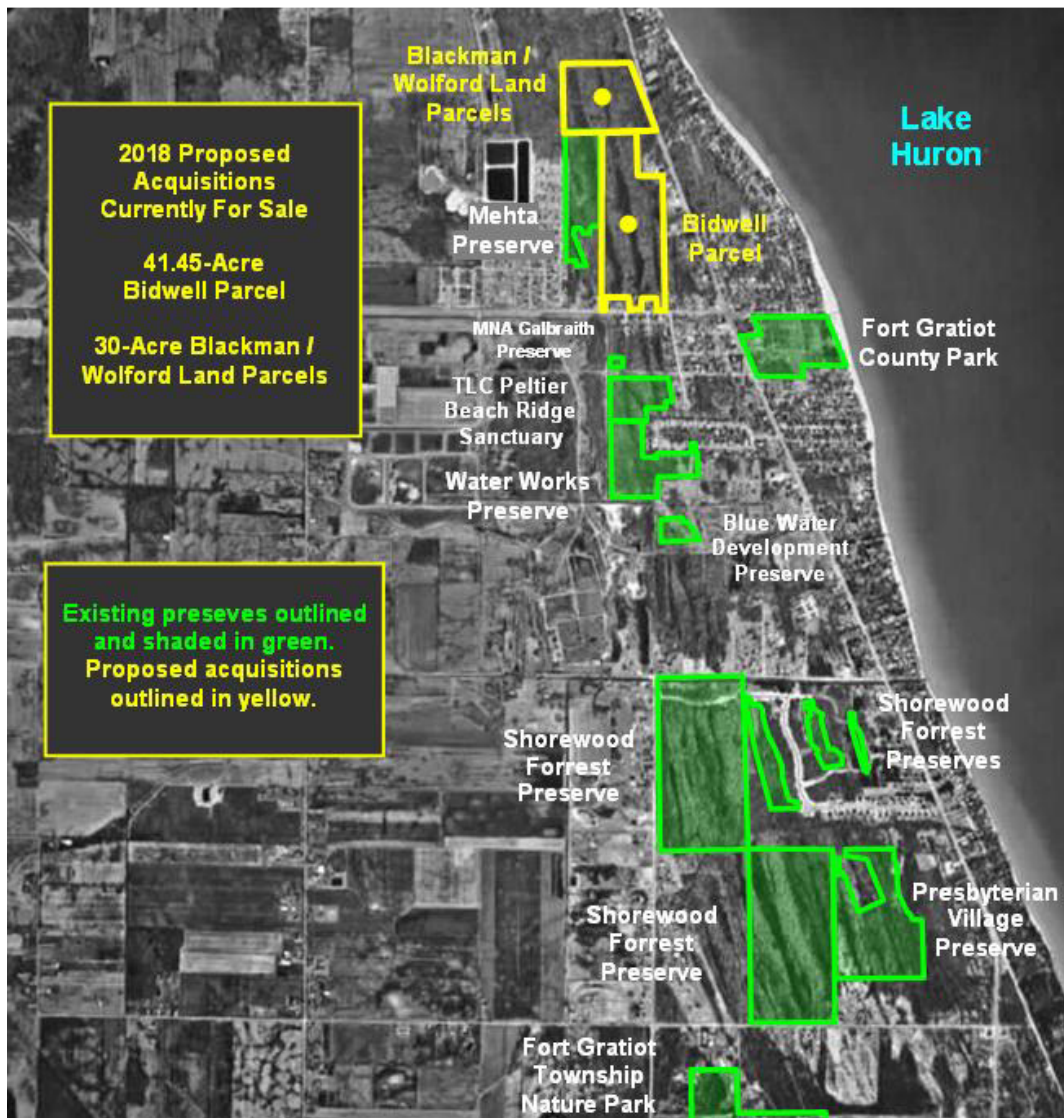


This spring revealed that there were in fact many Red Trillium (at right) under the barberry hiding from deer. Nice thing about using a torch instead of herbicide, it allows us to be selective in our control. Is it a mistake to eliminate the barberry? I don't think so. The trillium probably wouldn't last that much longer under the dense cover, and left unchecked, a large part of the

forest would soon be over-run by barberry. The real problem is not enough forest and too many deer.

Beach Ridge and Swale Project Burtchville Township Saint Clair County

The TLC is attempting to work with various partners to protect key properties that would complete an approximately 4.5-mile corridor on the beach ridge landscape connecting Port Huron to Lakeport State Park. Two properties are currently for sale that are important pieces of a future coastal park; the 41-acre Bidwell parcel and 30-acre Wolford Land parcel as shown in yellow on the 1995 aerial photograph below. Existing protected lands are shown in green. The Bidwell and Wolford Land parcels are some of the best remaining examples of the beach ridge and swale landscape remaining in Saint Clair County. Note the dark wetland swales which show very well on the 1995 aerial photo.



The beach ridge and swale landscape is a very unique formation of parallel sand ridges and muck wetlands that were deposited from about 4,500 years ago as high post-glacial lake levels receded as the new St. Clair River outlet down-cut rapidly. The landscape contains a unique forest community with uncommon species found in few other parts of Michigan, including: Purple-flowering Raspberry, known from only seven Michigan counties and the Lower Peninsula equivalent of the Upper Peninsula Thimbleberry; Yellow Lady-slipper orchid, infrequently found in muck and sand wetlands; the Eastern Hog-nosed Snake, whose primary range is in the west-central US but found occasionally in Michigan dunes and other open sand habitats; and a great abundance of migratory birds, including many uncommon and rare warblers. What remains of the landscape in Fort Gratiot and Burtchville is the only occurrence from Ohio up to the tip of the Thumb where there is a similar formation at Port Crescent and Sleeper State Parks and along parts of Saginaw Bay.



Purple-flowering Raspberry on the Presbyterian Villages Lake Huron Woods preserve in Fort Gratiot.



Yellow Lady-slipper orchid on the Shorewood Forrest preserve in Fort Gratiot.



Eastern Hog-nosed Snake near the TLC Peltier Beach Ridge Sanctuary in Fort Gratiot.



Magnolia Warbler on the Shorewood Forrest preserve in Fort Gratiot.

Being a linear landscape, the coastal beach ridge and swale forest is naturally suited as a greenway corridor. A proposed walking and biking trail would traverse the entire park from Port Huron north to Lakeport State Park, providing an excellent opportunity for interpretive signage describing the landscape, geology, and natural community. We believe the park would be a significant destination for birders as the coastal forest is a major corridor for migratory birds moving up and down along Lake Huron. When completed and with some promotion, this coastal park could attract birders on a level similar to Point Pelee National Park in Ontario.

Are you interested in helping with this project? If so, please contact us at 810-346-2584 or mail@ThumbLand.org.

Ecology News

Hunters Declining

So often, we are reminded that hunter monies paid for this or that. It's on all the maps of the Michigan state game areas. But unbelievably, the number of hunters and hunting revenue has been declining since the mid 90's. I find it hard to believe with all of the hunting programs, products, and popularity of large outdoor sporting goods stores. Federal and state resource agencies are now finding it much harder to budget with the reduced revenue. Nothing against hunting in general, but this is an opportunity that the growing non-hunting passive recreation crowd should take advantage of. That means hikers, campers, cross-country skiers, kayakers, canoers, birders, botanists, photographers, and so on.

I believe that all outdoor enthusiasts need to step up and band together in a broad coalition to offer a solid base of funding for our natural areas – state game areas, state parks, state forests, national forests, and local lands. I see this as an opportunity to have a bigger voice for multiple recreational uses of lands that have traditionally been managed primarily for hunting. True, we don't bring home a deer or turkey, and we don't need to buy guns and bullets, or buy licenses, except state and federal park passes. But, we still obtain great value from the outdoors. How much is it worth to you? In a recent discussion with a friend, we both agreed that we'd easily pay at least \$100 per year as a dedicated tax for ensuring the integrity of our public lands. How about \$200 per year if half of that was dedicated to your local natural areas? I'd gladly do it.

<https://www.npr.org/2018/03/20/593001800/decline-in-hunters-threatens-how-u-s-pays-for-conservation>

Bolder Targets Needed To Protect Nature For People's Sake

Well, this is no surprise and something I've been saying for a long time. If you think the few public lands and the highly fragmented and rapidly disappearing private natural areas in our region are enough to sustain us in the long-term, let alone nature in general, think again. In my opinion, the majority of preservation / conservation efforts amount to what I call "ecological triage". It means trying to save the best, least degraded areas, and letting the rest go. That kind of prioritizing is necessary because of funding limitations and other issues. But it shouldn't be mistaken for the final plan that's going to get us and nature to where we need to be in the long-term.

As this study says, most ecosystem services on which humanity relies are provided predominantly by areas that are not officially protected, or roughly 83 to 90% of the earth's surface. "Humanity asks a lot of the natural world. We need it to purify our water and air, to maintain our soils, and to regulate our climate," said lead author Associate Professor Maron of the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Queensland in Australia. "Yet even as we increase the extent of protected areas, they don't necessarily prevent the loss of natural systems. They're often located in areas that might not have been lost anyway -- and the current target of protecting 17 percent of terrestrial systems will never be enough to protect species as well as provide the benefits humanity needs."

Think globally. Act locally.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/06/180618113014.htm>

William Collins
Executive Director
Thumb Land Conservancy
4975 Maple Valley Road
Marlette , Michigan USA 48453
810-346-2584
mail@ThumbLand.org
ThumbLand.org