

THE MICHIGAN WILDLIFE VOLUNTEER NEWS

Michigan Wildlife Conservancy 40th Anniversary

Michigan Wildlife Conservancy Newsletter

www.MiWildlife.org

Fall/Winter 2022-23

Expanding the role of the private sector...

... 40 YEARS OF WORKING FOR FISH & WILDLIFE!

The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, originally named Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation, is celebrating 40 years of helping fish and wildlife throughout our state. Founded by the late Russell Bengel of Jackson, after meetings with fellow conservationists at a kitchen table, the organization began mobilizing private sector resources to fill gaps in programs to foster the wild animals and plants that enrich our lives. The approach has always been to position the organization as a leader, not just a supporter of the work of government. That requires a staff capable of designing and supervising projects on land or water, and the ability to serve as a contractor when needed. The organization has, from the very beginning, helped

people help wildlife through training and education.

Since 1982, the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy has worked in every county in our state, in urban as well as the most remote parts of Michigan. MWC's incredibly diverse projects and programs have involved mobilizing the resources of thousands of donors and volunteers. It has trained citizens how to restore wetlands on private lands, control invasive exotic plants, trap wild hogs, and conduct field studies of rare animals. Now, the organization is looking forward to more years of helping conserve the natural resources of what the late Mark Carlson, photographer and supporter of the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, called "Michigan: Simply Beautiful."

MWC milestones in our first 40 years!

1982 – Russ Bengel and supporters launched the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation (later renamed Michigan Wildlife Conservancy to reflect a broadening mission).

1984 – In an official ceremony, Governor James J. Blanchard declared November 4-10, 1984, Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation Week, focusing public attention of the private-sector fish and wildlife efforts of the foundation. Governor Blanchard said: The foundation is developing and coordinating programs....that in some instances are not possible for government to achieve...These foundation projects symbolize a new era in Michigan conservation."

1985 – MWC completed the Milli-Ander Wetland Restoration Project north of St. Johns. The state's largest private-sector wetlands project was named after former-Governor William Milliken and state representative Tom Anderson. The latter was a long-time Board Member of the Conservancy.

1986 – MWC published a research paper on genetic issues in wild turkey management that was endorsed by the Technical Committee of the National Wild Turkey Federation. The MWC's Southern Michigan Wild Turkey Restoration Project helped bring wild strain turkeys to our state.

Milestones, continued on page 3

A FOCUS ON COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Since its inception, the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy has been determined to spend money wisely. The organization's leaders have been committed to staying on the cutting edge of new technology, working collaboratively with other groups to leverage the Conservancy staff's knowledge and expertise, and carrying the necessary liability insurance to serve as a contractor. The Conservancy has worked closely with a wide variety of partners to find the least expensive ways to complete complicated projects such as the ones described in our "Milestones" in this Anniversary issue of the Wildlife Volunteer.

Top right: Workers toil in a boring pit at the Lake Orion dam.

Bottom right: Cold water rushes into Paint Creek from control structure to improve trout habitat.



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THE ROOTS OF A UNIQUE CONSERVATION LEGACY

The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy's roots date back to the late 1970s when awareness of dramatic changes in Michigan's landscape was becoming increasingly apparent. Russell H. Bengel, a well-known Jackson businessman and ardent conservationist, was perhaps most concerned about the widespread drainage of wetlands. Determined to help reverse the trend and restore some of the degraded habitats, he formed a Michigan Waterfowl Foundation. Three years later, he met with a handful of other conservationists to get a fresh infusion of aspirations and ideas. Russ Bengel was urged to widen the scope, and the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation was born. Its basic mission was to mobilizing private sector resources for fish and wildlife as efficiently as possible. Russ Bengel died before any of the group's projects were completed, but before his



Founder of the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, Russ Bengel and his wife and lifetime supporter, Ruth Bengel.

death, Russ and his wife, Ruth, endowed the Foundation with a \$1 million gift to perpetuate private-sector work for wildlife. Ten years later, the Foundation had spent over \$1,500,000 to restore and improve habitats, and had involved more than 3,000 supporters, cooperators, and contributors.

After the deaths of Russ and Ruth, their two daughters, Jean Laughlin of Jackson, Michigan and Margaret Beckman of Valle Crucis, North

principles of Russ Bengel and the conservation leaders he brought together. Cost efficiency is still a concern, and the organization's strength continues to be its adaptability—its willingness to change—in response to the conservation needs in our state.

In the early years, the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy rented office space in the south part of Lansing. But the organization's leaders knew a permanent home was needed. It turned out that the vision of Russ Bengel would merge with the vision of another conservationist he would never meet.

Angelo (Angel) Priggooris was born in a small Greek village and emigrated to Michigan in 1902. He settled in Lansing in 1905 and earned money at his shoe shine stand. Like Russ Bengel, he had a knack for business and eventually became one of the major business and property owners in Lansing. In 1938, he bought 263 undeveloped acres north of East Lansing. It had a marshy area called Grass Lake, two bogs, and extensive woods. Angel used it for hunting, fishing, and raising bees. Upon his death in 1958, he left the property to the City of Lansing for use as a park or recreation area. However, the City never physically protected it or improved the land because of its distance from the core of Lansing. Piles of junk illegally dumped on the site eventually dotted every place a vehicle could reach.



Angel's heirs asked that the property be used according to his intent, and in 1994, the City of Lansing sold most of it to the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, for its Bengel Wildlife Center. MWC put together an "army" of volunteers that cleaned up the trash, and built its permanent home.

Angel's heirs asked that the property be used according to his intent, and in 1994, the City of Lansing sold most of it to the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, for its Bengel Wildlife Center. MWC put together an "army" of volunteers that cleaned up the trash, and built its permanent home.



Richard (Dick) Beckman, Margaret Bengel Beckman, Jean Bengel Laughlin, and Sheldon Laughlin. Circa 2006

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The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy is a non-profit 501 C(3) membership organization that restores and conserves fish and wildlife habitat and trains others to do the same.

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Member of



Jean Laughlin (left) and Margaret Beckman, at the dedication of the Bengel Wildlife Center in 2000.

Carolina, continued to be outstanding stewards of their parents' organization, providing resources annually to assist its mission until they both recently passed, Margaret in 2019 and Jean in 2021. Today, the MWC continues to adhere to the basic



Founders' Legacy Included The Bengel Wildlife Center

During its first 12 years, the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy worked primarily out of rented offices in the south part of Lansing. Storage of project materials and work space for staff caused some problems, but the organizations leaders were determined to not let those types of things limit the Conservancy's mission work. However, they were aware that acquisition of the right site could allow the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy to greatly expand its demonstration and citizen training programs. That would require a building that could host a wide variety of conferences and other educational events.

As the Conservancy's Board of Trustees and others were discussing options, they were guided by the principle that no monies raised for fish and wildlife work should be used for land or building construction. Rather, a Capital Campaign would have to be organized to find new funds. In 1994, the MWC accepted the offer of Board Member, Gordon Guyer, to serve as its campaign Chair-person. He was uniquely qualified for such a task. A long-time and well-known conservationist, Dr. Guyer was an interim president of Michigan State University, and Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The fund-raising effort was kick-started by anonymous donors who provided the money for purchase of the land for the Bengel Wildlife Center, and within five years the "Laughlin Building" overlooked Priggooris Lake.

The Laughlin Building and the rest of the Bengel Wildlife Center have been "up and running for more than 20 years." The Conservancy restored water levels in the former Grass Lake before re-naming it, and later acquired a 26-acre borrow pit created by the Michigan Department of Transportation as part of the construction of I-69 during the 1970s. The organization recently began developing the excavated pond as a fishing area. (See article on page 7 of this issue.) Today, the 259-acre Center represents the combined legacies of both the Bengel and Priggooris families, who wanted future generations to be able to enjoy fish and wildlife.



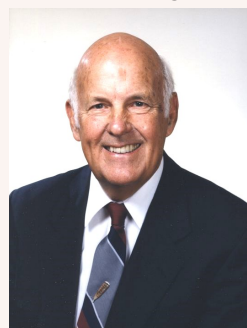
Front of Laughlin Lodge at the Bengel Wildlife Center. The 12,000 sq. ft. building is used for staff offices and has various rooms that are rented daily to raise funds.



The Laughlin Lodge added in 2017, a 3,600 sq. ft. deck with a clear polycarbonate roof. It overlooks the restored Priggooris Lake and is the premier wedding venue in the greater Lansing area. It hosts 50 weddings a year, raising significant funds for MWC mission projects. It's also available for other private and public rentals.



Aerial view of BWC buildings & Priggooris Lake.



Dr. Gordon Guyer headed a successful capital campaign to provide funds for the Bengel Wildlife Center.

Milestones, continued from page 1

1988 – The organization's Rights-Of-Way For Wildlife Program along Michigan's power lines, gas pipeline corridors, and highways received national recognition.

1988—The MWC launched its Forest Wildlife Project providing technical services to landowners interested in habitat improvements. The effort was a forerunner of similar programs offered by agencies and organizations today.

1989 – MWC received the Michigan Outdoor Writers Association's "Clean Waters Award" for its innovative Rouge River Fish Habitat Restoration Project in Oakland County.

1991 – The MWC served as the contract administrator for a joint project with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to draw cold water from the bottom of Lake Orion in Oakland County to cool Paint Creek. The innovative work was also supported by Trout Unlimited and several other organizations, and cooled the stream enough to support trout in an eight-mile- long stretch.

1992 – The MWC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service launched the Michigan Private Wetlands Program that set new standards for cost-efficiency in restoring drained basins for wetland wildlife and trained volunteers to help in a wide variety of ways.

1992 – The MWC started training drain commissioners on ways to reduce their impacts on the environment.

1993 – The MWC and the U.S. Forest Service continued to partner on wetland restorations and started the "Fire Up For Wildlife" project, jointly promoting and funding prescribed burns aimed at restoring and maintaining grasslands and other fire-dependent cover types in Michigan's Huron-Manistee National Forest.

1994 – The organization played a major role in restoring Kirtland's warbler habitat on 300 acres owned by Trout Unlimited in Crawford County. It was the first effort to help the endangered species on private lands in Michigan. The project eventually provided important nesting habitat for many pairs of the rare song bird.

1996 — The MWC launched a major effort to restore wetlands, prairies, and other habitats on nature centers in Southern Michigan.

Milestones, continued on page 5

PARTNERSHIPS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

For 40 years, the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy has built a track record of efficiency in restoring wetlands, prairies, streams and other habitats, educating citizens, and conducting important research. Agencies and organizations that have partnered with MWC on specific, on-the-ground projects are listed below. Unfortunately, space does not allow listing of the thousands of other groups and individuals that played important roles in MWC's 40 years of working for fish and wildlife. Such un-sung heroes include organizations and individuals that provided the sites for MWC's extensive work at nature centers, school grounds, and private properties.

Anglers of the AuSable	<i>The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and MWC partnered to restore wetlands on private lands.</i> 		chapters)
Antrim County Road Commission			Potter Park Zoo (Lansing)
Bath Township Lions International			Saginaw County Parks & Recreation Commission
Bay de Noc Great Lakes Sportfishermen			Shiawassee Flats Citizens & Hunters Association
Berrien County Drain Commission			Shell Oil Company
Berrien County Sportsmen's Club			Southern Michigan Trappers Association
Cadillac Public Schools			Stony Creek Conservation Association
Central Michigan University			Straits Area Sportsmen's Club
City of Cadillac			Stroh Brewery
City of Carson City			Timberland Resources Conservation & Development Area Council
City of Gladstone	Hillsdale County Parks Commission	Michigan Forest Association	Traverse City Chapter of Whitetails Unlimited
City of Southfield (Oakland County)	Holland Rod and Gun Club	Michigan Loon Preservation Association	Upper Black River Watershed Committee
Clinton County Conservation District	Huron Pines Resource Conservation & Development Area Council	Michigan Nature Association	U.P. Sportsman's Alliance
Conservation Resource Alliance	Ingham County Drain Commission	Michigan Pork Producers Association	U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services Branch
Consumers Energy	Kiwanis Club of Hillsdale	Michigan Ruffed Grouse Association	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
County of Jackson	Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians	Michigan Trout Unlimited (multiple chapters)	U.S. Forest Service
Detroit Edison	Macatawa Bay Waterfowlers Association (of MDHA)	Michigan Chapter of the Wild Turkey Federation	Walleyes For Iosco County
Detroit Zoo	Mason County Walleye Association	Michigan Sharp-tailed Grouse Association	Washtenaw County Drain Commission
The DeVlieg Foundation—a major donor contributing 15 consecutive years to projects and Bengel Center	Mauser Harmony With Nature Foundation	Mead Paper Company	West Michigan Wetlands Foundation
Dominos' Drummond Island Wildlife Habitat Foundation	Mellon Foundation	Montcalm County Drain Commission	Wildlife Forever
Drayton Plains Nature Center	Menasha Corporation	National Campers & Hikers Association	Wildlife Unlimited of Allegan and Ottawa Counties
Drummond Island Sportsman's Club	Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners	National Park Service	Wildlife Unlimited of Delta County
Ducks Unlimited	Michigan Audubon Society	National Wildlife Federation	University of Michigan-Flint
Fenton-Livingston Soil & Water Conservation District	Michigan Bear Hunters Association	National Wild Turkey Federation	Binder Park Zoo (Battle Creek)
FishAmerica Foundation	Michigan Corn Growers Association	Natural Resources Conservation Service	Conservation Dogs Collective
Gannett Foundation	Michigan Department of Natural Resources	Oakland County Sportfishing Association	Michigan Department of Military Affairs/Army National Guard
Gladwin Area Walleye Association	Michigan Department of Transportation	Pajau Wildlife Foundation—has contributed 38 consecutive years to MWC for multiple projects	
Gratiot County Drain Commission	Michigan Duck Hunters Association (multiple chapters)	Pheasants Forever, Inc. (multiple	
Great Lakes Gas Transmission Company	Michigan Federation of Fly Fishers		
Harder Foundation			
Hiawatha Sportsmans Club			



MICHIGAN WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY

40-YEARS OF RESTORATIONS, RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy has been restoring wetlands, prairies and streams and helping people help wildlife since 1982. Mere lists, like the ones on the pages that follow, can't capture the significance of four decades of working for fish and wildlife. But they do show that visions can indeed turn into reality--especially with the help of members and friends. The organization pledged to go almost anywhere there are conservation needs and many of those "completed" projects have not only stood the "test of time," but have been catalysts for later work by others. That is the mark of a true legacy--when the dreams of few become shared by many.

WETLANDS RESTORATIONS

Since its inception in 1982, the restoration and enhancement of degraded wetlands has been a primary focus of the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy. We completed nearly 400 projects on private lands. Below is a list of others on public lands of all types and utility rights-of-way. These projects involved complicated construction of dikes and additional water control structures. In addition to funds, we provided contracting and project management for many of these.



Project Name	County/Region
Bengel Wetland Restoration**	Jackson
Kawkawlin Creek Flooding**	Midland
Shiawassee State Game Area Marsh Improvement**	Saginaw
Milli-Ander Wetland Restoration**	Gratiot
Maple River State Game Area Water Control**	Gratiot
Allegan State Game Area Flooding*	Allegan
Borculo State Game Area Nesting Ponds	Ottawa
Houghton Lake Flats Restoration**	Roscommon
Muskegon State Game Area Wetland Restoration*	Muskegon
Green Flooding Marsh Restoration*	Montcalm
Humony Dam Marsh Restoration*	Montcalm
Lapeer State Game Area Marsh Restoration*	Lapeer
Nyanguing Pointe Wetland Enhancement	Bay
Fenville Pond Construction	Allegan
Dansville State Game Area Marsh Improvement*	Ingham
Horton Dam Wetland Restoration*	Jackson
Maissou Island Wetland Improvement	Huron
Pte. Mouillee Wetland Improvements**	Monroe
Livingston County Farm Wetlands Demonstration**	Livingston
Olga Lake Wetland Restoration**	Lake
Sprinkler Lake Wetland Restoration*	Alcona
McGillis Creek Wetland Restoration*	Alcona
Mitchell Creek Wetland Restoration	Wexford
Foote Wetland Restoration*	Alcona

* = 50 or more acres

Project Name	County/Region
Long Lake Wetland Improvement**	Lapeer
Prior Road Marsh Improvement*	Saginaw
Sturgeon River Sloughs Habitat Restoration**	Houghton
Wahl Road Marsh Restorations**	Saginaw
Crow Island Marsh Restoration*	Saginaw
Elmhirst Creek Wetland Restoration*	Mackinac
Featherbed Wetland Restoration*	Mecosta
Pickeral Creek Wetland Restoration**	Mecosta
Whiting-Muscott Marsh Restoration*	Monroe
Loon Nesting Platforms	Northern MI
Moot Ranch Wetland Improvement	Newaygo
Rose Lake Flooding Restoration*	Shiawassee
Muskegon Right-of-Way Nesting boxes	Muskegon
Reigle Wetland Restoration	Alcona
Hayes Wetland Restoration *	Alcona
Outlaw Wetland restoration	Alcona
Big Gulch Wetland Restoration	Alcona
Otter Creek Wetland Restoration	Alcona
Walkinshaw Wetland Restoration (Tech. Assistance)	Oceana
Cattail Wetland/Caddo Complex Wetland Improv't.	Alcona
Oscoda County Wetland Enhancements*	Oscoda
Grass Lake Wetland Restoration*	Clinton
Clark's Marsh Enhancement*	Alcona
Muskrat Lake Wetland Restoration*	Clinton

** = 100 or more acres



STREAM RESTORATIONS AND LAKE IMPROVEMENTS

The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy has been a leader in developing new and cost-effective ways to improve habitat since its beginning 40 years ago. Many of its projects have not only restored important habitat for trout and other species, but also demonstrated the best techniques for completing such work. For example, the U.S. Forest Service conducted follow-up research on Bigelow Creek after the Conservancy led placement and construction of current deflectors and bank revetments in the Newaygo County stream. The resulting data showed significant improvements in the number and sizes of brown trout due to creation of the deep pools and riffles. Listed below are specific sites of the Conservancy's stream and lake habitat work.

Project Name	County/Region	Project Name	County/Region
Yellow Dog River Bank Stabilization	Marquette	Fish Creek Dam Removal and Habitat Restoration	Montcalm
Thompson Creek Fish Cover Improvement	Schoolcraft	AuSable River Habitat Restoration+	Crawford
South Branch Carp River Bank Stabilization	Mackinac	Tawas River Habitat Improvement	Iosco
Maple River Bank Stabilization	Emmet	Lake Orion/Paint Creek Bottom Draw Project++	Oakland
Paint Creek Bank Stabilization	Oakland	Rifle River Habitat Improvement+	Ogemaw
Pere Marquette Bank Stabilization	Lake	Mason County Walleye Rearing Pond	Mason
Jordon River Bank Stabilization	Antrim	Coppler Creek Bank Restoration	Iosco
Upper Manistee River Bank Stabilization	Otsego	Lewis Emery Park Fish Rearing Pond	Hillsdale
Drayton Plains Rearing Ponds Restoration	Oakland	Berrien County Fish Rearing Pond	Berrien
Sturgeon River Bank Stabilization	Otsego	Freeman Creek Habitat Restoration	Newaygo
Gladstone River Fishing Pier Habitat Instillation	Delta	Pere Marquette River Habitat Restoration	Lake
Rouge River Habitat Restoration	Oakland	Carleton Creek Habitat Restoration	Oceana
S & H Lake Fish Habitat Improvement	Saginaw	Little Henna Creek Habitat Restoration	Muskegon
AuSable River Bank Stabilization	Crawford	Martin Creek Habitat Restoration	Newaygo
Coldwater River Bank Stabilization	Kent	West Branch of Pine River Habitat Restoration	Alcona
Shiawassee River Fish Rearing Pond	Saginaw	Little South Branch Pere Marquette River Restoration	Lake
Holland Fish & Game Club Rearing Pond	Ottawa	Paint Creek Trout Habitat Restoration	Oakland
Swan Lake Erosion Control	Allegan	Bigelow Creek Trout Habitat Restoration+	Newaygo
Sand Creek Bank Stabilization	Allegan	Clam River Habitat Restoration	Wexford
Cedar River Bank Stabilization	Gladwin	Black River Habitat Restoration++	Multiple Cty's
Bigelow Creek Trout Habitat Restoration	Newaygo	Upper Manistee Habitat Restoration	Manistee
Escanaba River Habitat Restoration	Marquette	North Branch AuSable Habitat Restoration	Crawford
Bryan Creek Trout Habitat Restoration	Marquette	Little Manistee Habitat Restoration	Lake
Salling Dam Removal and Stream Restoration+	Crawford	Stony Creek Habitat Restoration++	Clinton
AuSable River Bank Stabilization	Iosco	Upper Bigelow Creek Brook Trout Restoration	Newaygo
Little Manistee Bank Stabilization	Manistee	Mena Creek Brook Trout Habitat Restoration	Newaygo
White River Bank Stabilization	Oceana	Coe Creek Trout Habitat Restoration	Lake
Mead Property Walleye Rearing Pond	Alger	White River Brook Trout Habitat Restoration	Newaygo
Gladwin Walleye Rearing Pond	Gladwin	Tamarack Creek Fish Habitat Improvement	Montcalm
Carp River Habitat Improvement+	Mackinac	North Branch Manistee River Trout Habitat	Manistee
White River Habitat Restoration++	Oceana	Cedar Creek Trout Habitat Restoration	Muskegon
Among Lake Fish Cover Improvement	Newaygo	Bark River Fish Habitat Restoration	Delta
Bliss Lake Fish Cover Improvement	Alcona	Ogontz River Trout Habitat Improvement	Delta
Pine Lake Fish Cover Improvement	Manistee	Ford River Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat Rest.	Delta
Twinwood Lake Fish Cover Improvement	Mecosta	Sturgeon Spawning Reef Construction	Detroit & St. Clair Rivers
Hoags Lake Fish Cover Improvement	Manistee	Bear Creek Trout Habitat Restoration	Schoolcraft
		Ruby Creek Trout Habitat Restoration	Oceana Cty.
+ = more than 1 mile of stream		++ = more than 3 miles of stream	





UPLAND HABITAT RESTORATIONS

While the loss and/or degradation of Michigan's wetlands has long been recognized, the loss of our state's prairie habitat received much less attention until the last 20 years. The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy was "ahead of the curve," planting or otherwise establishing thousands of acres of prairie grasses and wildflowers to help many species of song birds and other wildlife such as the endangered Karner blue butterfly. MWC has also been involved in various types of long-term management, such as prescribed burning, for restored prairies. Upland forests have also been helped by the Conservancy.



Project Name	County/Region
Rights-Of-Way for Wildlife Program**	Statewide
Forest Wildlife Project (multiple sites)**	Northern MI
Crow Island nesting Meadow*	Saginaw
Oakland County Nesting Meadows	Oakland
Harrisville Prairie Establishment	Iosco, Alcona
Drummond island Grouse Habitat**	Chippewa
Forest Snags Demonstration*	Wexford
Kirtland's warbler habitat Restoration**	Crawford
I-69 Bluebird Trail	Shiawassee
Raco Plains Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Restoration**	Chippewa
Dutch Lake Prairie Nesting Habitat	Oscoda
Olga Lake Prairie Nesting Habitat	Lake
Crane Pond Nesting Meadow	Cass
Stoker Marsh Nesting Meadow*	Jackson
St. Johns Marsh Nesting Meadow	St. Clair
Pigeon River Country Tag Alder Habitat*	Otsego
Lost Nation Nesting Meadow	Hillsdale
Diamondale Right-of-Way Wildlife Habitat	Eaton
* = 50 or more acres	

Project Name	County/Region
Pigeon River Country Pipeline Wildlife Habitat	Montmorency
Mecosta County Right-of-Way Nesting Meadow	Mecosta
Saginaw County Pipeline Bluebird Trail	Saginaw
Fire-up for Wildlife Program**	Northern MI
Lake Michigan Blueberry Rejuvenation	Mason
Mio Right-of-Way Prairie Grass Planting	Alcona
Curtisville Prairie Grass Planting*	Alcona
Tuttle Marsh Prairie Grass Planting	Alcona
Cooper Creek Prairie Grass establishment	Mason
Brandybrook Aspen Regeneration	Wexford
Manistee Prairie Restoration	Newaygo, Oceana
Wildlife Habitat Along County Drains Program**	Multiple Counties
Bengel Wildlife Center Prairie Restoration	Clinton
Valley Road Dry Sand Prairie Restoration	Iosco
Mason County Prairie Restoration*	Mason
High Banks Prairie Restoration	Alcona
Tuttle Marsh Nesting Meadow*	Iosco
Fraser Meadow Restoration*	Alcona
Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Restoration	Oceana County
** = 100 or more acres	

EDUCATION AREAS AND PROGRAMS



The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy has restored prairie and wetland habitats from one to 25 acres on school-owned properties through its Nature Education Sites for Tomorrow (NEST) Program. Major habitat restorations have been conducted at nature centers in Southern Michigan. The Conservancy conceived and initiated Annie's Big Nature Lesson that offers week-long opportunities for teachers and students to learn about the environment. It also developed the Becoming Outdoors Smart in Summer (BOSS) Program to teach children about conservation issues and how to identify trees, birds, and other wildlife and plants. Thousands of copies of the BOSS guidebook have been used by parents and their kids since 2015. In its 40th Anniversary year, the Conservancy continued its emphasis on youth education by developing the Bengel Fishing Village in a former highway borrow pit at MWC's Bengel Wildlife Center. The list below includes school and nature center sites where the Conservancy has completed on-ground projects.

Nature Center / Zoo / School Name	County/Region/City
Hartley Outdoor Education Center	Saginaw
Woldumar Nature Center	Ingham
For-Mar Nature Center	Genesee
Fowler Center	Lapeer
Drayton Plains Nature Center	Oakland
L.M. Wise Educational Preserve	Allegan
DeGraff Nature Center	Ottawa
Shiawassee Nat'l Refuge Backyard Wildlife Demo.	Saginaw
Potter Park Zoo	Ingham

Nature Center / Zoo / School Name	County/Region/City
Detroit Zoo	Oakland
Cadillac High School	Cadillac
Call Technological High School	Detroit
Mackenzie High School	Detroit
Martin Luther King Jr. High School	Detroit
Osborn High School	Detroit
Phillips High School	Muskegon
Hornug Elementary School	Brighton
Engadine Consolidated School	Engadine

Nature Center / Zoo / School Name	County/Region/City
Munn Middle School	Fowlerville
Forest Hills School District	Grand Rapids
Traverse City Central Senior High School	Traverse City
St. Charles Elementary School	St. Charles
Blessed Sacrament School	Grand Rapids
St. Andrews School	Grand Rapids
St. John Vianney School	Grand Rapids
St. Paul the Apostle School	Grand Rapids
St. Stephen School	Grand Rapids
Holy Spirit School	Grand Rapids
Immaculate Heart of Mary School	Grand Rapids
Our Lady of Consolation School	Grand Rapids
St. Alphonsus School	Grand Rapids
St. Anthony School	Grand Rapids
St. Anthony of Padua School	Grand Rapids
St. Jude School	Grand Rapids
St. Michael School	Grand Rapids
St. Thomas the Apostle School	Grand Rapids
Chikaming Elementary School	Harbert/Berrien Co.
Saginaw Intermediate School District	St. Charles

Nature Center / Zoo / School Name	County/Region/City
Bloomfield Hills Schools	Bloomfield Hills
Okemos High School	Okemos
Temperance Road Academy	Temperance
Mid-Michigan Academy	Lansing
Laingsburg High School	Laingsburg
Midland Academy of Advanced & Creative Studies	Midland
Mayville Elementary School	Mayville
Miller Early Childhood Center	Brighton
Churchill Elementary School	Muskegon
Starr Elementary School	Royal Oak
Palms Elementary School	Fair Haven
Harold Steele High School	Fenwick
Deerton School	Munising
Fairview Area Schools	Fairview
E.B. Holman School	Atlantic Mine/Houghton
Spring Valley Elementary School	Kalamazoo
F.W. Ritter Elementary School	Carleton
Pinckney High School	Pinckney
Wakazoo Elementary School	Holland
Hudsonville Elementary School	Hudsonville
Byron Center Middle School	Byron Center

SPECIES RE-INTRODUCTIONS, RESEARCH, AND OTHER SPECIAL PROJECTS —



The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy has filled gaps in conservation for 40 years. We assisted with re-introduction of wild strain turkeys in both Southern Michigan and (later) in the Upper Peninsula, and moose in the Upper Peninsula. We conducted research on the rare cougar (statewide); fisher and American marten in the northern Lower Peninsula; and prairie vole and least shrew in Southern Michigan. The Conservancy was the first to conduct studies of genetic issues in Michigan turkey management, and the first to use specially-trained dogs to detect scats or rare mammals. We formed the Institute for Rare Mammal Studies in Michigan (IRMS) to continue such work. The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy's ability to fill gaps was on full display in 2010 when our state was threatened by populations of Russian wild boars that had escaped from game ranches and other facilities. MWC played a major role in launching the Michigan Wild Hog Removal Program, and trained landowners and other citizens to detect the invasive exotic animals and remove them by trapping or shooting.

Other special projects completed over the last 40 years included:

- ◆ Feasibility studies of use of various machines for excavation work in wetlands and streams, construction of predator exclusion fences in waterfowl nesting meadows, and pond construction.
- ◆ Study of wetland management potential on lands owned by Mead Paper Company (675,000 acres) in the Upper Peninsula.
- ◆ Participation in development of a master plan for the Drayton Plains Nature Center (Pontiac).
- ◆ Study of sharp-tailed grouse populations and habitats throughout northern Michigan.
- ◆ Demonstration projects and research for establishment of wild rice and the use of water level management to sustain this important plant species.



When our state was threatened by Russian wild boars in 2010, the federal government contracted with MWC to conduct town-hall style seminars at more than 40 locations for landowners and volunteers on detecting and trapping the invasive species. MWC also trained landowners on their properties at 50 other sites throughout the Lower Peninsula. The effort was instrumental in bringing the problem under control.

GREAT PROJECTS SERVE AS CATALYSTS FOR FUTURE EFFORTS



Twelve of the many members of the Michigan Rare Mammals Project Team. The Conservancy partnered with the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians to use a scat-detection dog to locate fishers and pine martens in Emmet County. The first –of-its-kind study found the rare species in several locales where they had not previously been confirmed.



The fisher has been the focus of recent studies by the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy's Institute for Rare Mammal Studies in Michigan.



Several chapters of the Michigan Duck Hunters Association were important partners in the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy's efforts to restore wetlands on private lands.



The MWC has played a key role in construction of several spawning reefs for the threatened lake sturgeon.

Holding the sturgeon is Pat Rusz and son Mark Rusz.

Milestones, continued from page 3

1998 – The organization launched an Urban Wildlife Initiative, and conceived and organized the Nature Education Sites For Tomorrow (NEST) Program that developed fish and wildlife habitats and outdoor education areas on school grounds throughout Michigan.

2000 – The Bengel Wildlife Center was formally dedicated, displaying habitat demonstration areas.

2002 – The MWC gained national recognition for its field studies of the cougar in Michigan and innovative methods for detecting large predators.

2002 – The MWC conceived and initiated Annie's BIG Nature Lesson that offers week-long opportunities for teachers and students to learn about the environment. Started with five teachers and 110 students, by 2006 it involved 44 teachers and over 1,300 students, and today there are networks of participating school districts, staff, and community partners.

2003 - The MWC began the process of raising the water level at the Bengel Wildlife Center's Priggooris Lake, restoring more than 60 acres of habitat for wetland-dwelling wildlife.

2006 – The MWC and Central Michigan University researchers published a peer-reviewed study that utilized DNA in scats (droppings) to confirm the presence of cougars at several locations in both peninsulas of Michigan.

2008 – The MWC served as a contract administrator to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and in cooperation with other U.S. and Canadian agencies and organizations to build a spawning reef for threatened lake sturgeon in the Lower Detroit River. Sturgeon were observed using this new reef in the following spring, and the project paved the way for similar efforts. The MWC would go on to assist with several major reef construction projects in the Detroit River and St. Clair River.

2010 – MWC partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services Branch to launch the Michigan Wild Hog Removal Program. MWC teamed with the federal Natural Resources & Conservation Service, the Michigan Pork Producers Association, and other groups to educate landowners to detect the invasive exotic animals and remove them by trapping or shooting.

Milestones, continued on page 7

THE GREAT TRASH HARVEST – VOLUNTEERS TO THE RESCUE!

Thirty years ago, the 259-acre Bengel Wildlife Center was not much to look at. Giles Roehl, then the Clinton County Extension Director, described it as “the most human-abused site in Michigan.” Although legally a park owned by the City of Lansing, it had been idle and unprotected for decades and was a popular dumping site. Every trail that could be driven was used by those who wanted a free and convenient place to get rid of their trash. Worse still, the trail ends had gradually grown up in trees and brush, making clean-up with heavy equipment very difficult.

The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy purchased the property in 1994, and after removing trash from several places on the east side of the property, decided to host an ambitious “trash harvest” in the west side of the land on September 16 of the following year. More than 250 volunteers showed up; about half were members of various student organizations from the campus of Michigan State University. The remainder came largely from civic groups, scout troops, and businesses.

The Michigan Army National Guard cooked and served all of the food that was dispensed at the morning and lunch-time work-breaks. By 2 o'clock, the volunteers had brought more than 60 cubic yards of trash to a central clearing where the main building of the Bengel Wildlife Center now stands. Steel was sorted out, tires were separated, and recyclable glass and other materials were

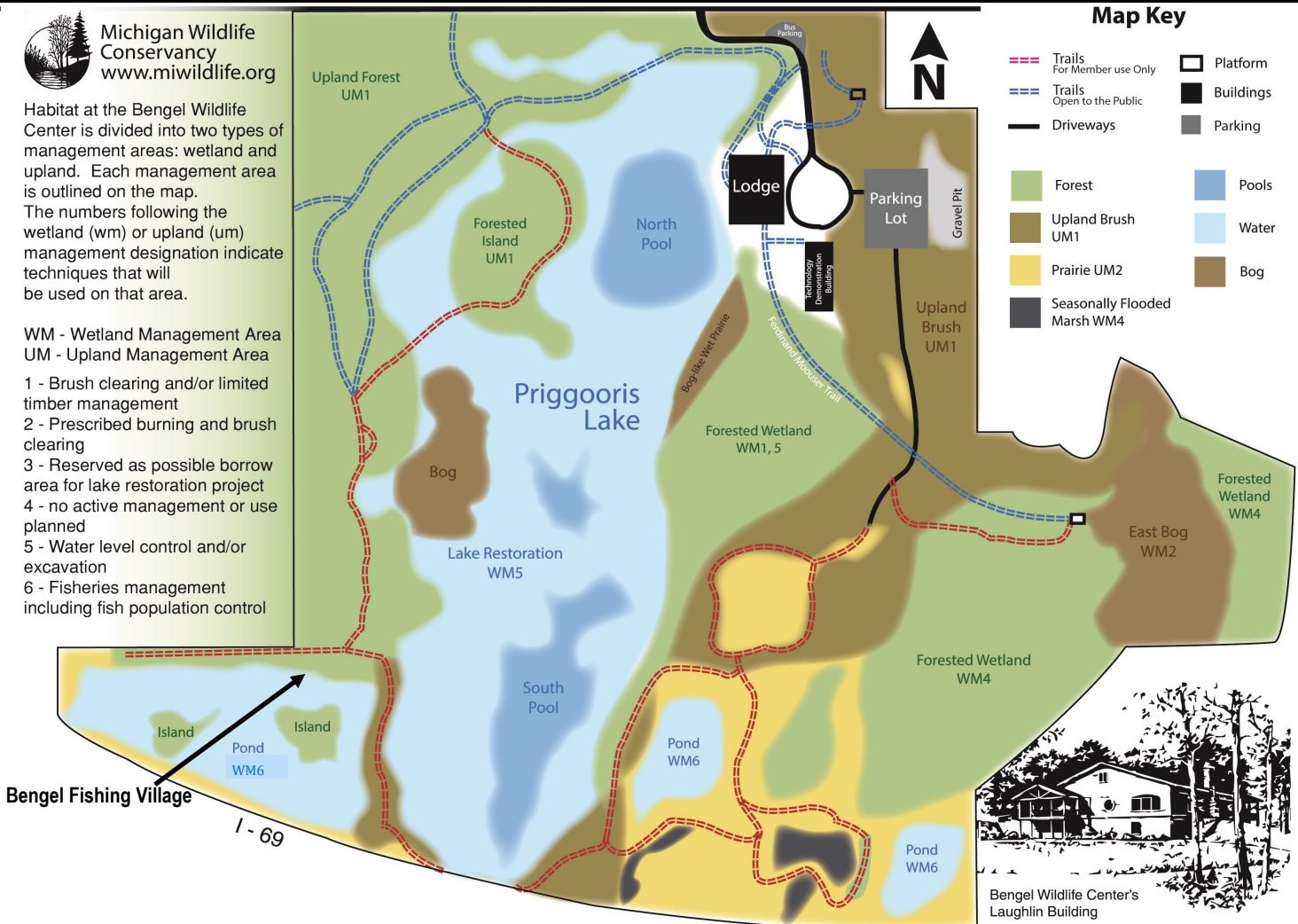
readied for removal in dump trucks. Non-recyclables totaled about half of the trash harvest that day.

Later in 1995, MWC received an “Outstanding Service Award” from Keep Michigan Beautiful, Inc. Today, the organization, along with many who use the Bengel Wildlife Center, can appreciate the long-lasting difference that volunteers made that warm, sunny, September day. It was not the first nor the last time that volunteers came to the fore-front to help MWC restore natural resources over its first 40 years.



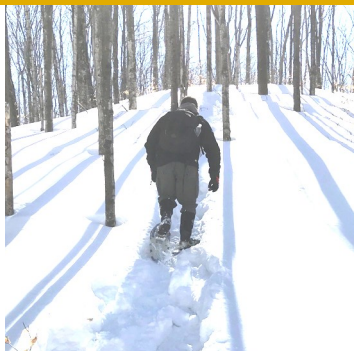
Volunteers joined in “The Great Trash Harvest”, in Sept. 1995.

A map of the 259 acre Bengel Wildlife Center grounds, highlighting the 4 miles of trails



A VISION FOR THE FUTURE—THE NEXT 40 YEARS

Thirty-eight years ago, when the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy was called the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation, Governor James J. Blanchard stated that the fledgling organization's projects and vision were symbolic of a "new era in Michigan conservation." He noted that the Foundation was "developing and coordinating programs that in some instances are not possible for government to achieve."



Dan Robbins also spoke often about the Conservancy never really reaching all of our goals—that there would always be new opportunities "just over the next hill."

The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy looks forward to more training of volunteers like the 100 'Wetlanders' that helped identify projects and

restore wetlands on private lands and the dozens of trackers that helped locate cougars, fishers, and other rare mammal species in regions where the professional scientists did not know the animals existed. MWC, through its Institute for Rare Mammal Studies in Michigan will continue to play a role in such efforts. But perhaps the most serious threat to Michigan's native flora and fauna is the proliferation of exotic plants and animals. That's where education and training is perhaps most needed. As a state, meaningful control of exotics will become a key part of habitat restoration and depend in part on early detection. That will be greatly aided as more citizens become educated about the problem and learn how to spot invasive exotics. Several agencies and universities offer a variety of related educational programs, but help from the private sector is urgently needed. It is the kind of gap the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy could help fill while maintaining the flexibility that has been one of the organization's hallmarks.

In the decades since Governor Blanchard declared a new era, the private sector has expanded its role in fish and wildlife conservation. But citizen involvement in protecting and fostering the plants and animals that enrich our lives remains urgently needed. The central questions to the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy are, of course, the same ones that leaders asked 40 years ago: "Where do we go from here?", and "How, can we best mobilize private sector resources for fish and wildlife?" The late Dan Robbins, the Foundation's Board President in 1984, frequently talked about the need for all citizens to become aware of their own potential to help wildlife—to not see fish and wildlife as only "government's concern." Citizens working with MWC answered that call remarkably well for 40 years—providing their time and talents as well as their financial support. If we are to continue to make a difference, "Citizen Science" will itself be the next era in Michigan conservation.

Milestones continued from page 5

2013-'14 – Over a two year period, MWC took the hog removal training to the people, conducting 22 town hall type educational seminars around the state that attracted more than a thousand Michigan landowners.

2013 – The MWC began planting wild rice in the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge in Saginaw County to determine how this historically-important plant could be re-established where geese, muskrats, and carp are abundant and prone to destroying wild rice beds.

2014 – The MWC initiated an innovative program called "Becoming Outdoors Smart In Summer" (BOSS) to teach children about conservation issues and how to identify trees, birds, and other wildlife and plants. BOSS steadily expanded, allowing families to work together to learn about wildlife, and now attracts thousands of new participants each year.

2016 – The organization established an Institute For Rare Mammal Studies in Michigan (IRMS) to conduct research on mammal species that are not the subject of current or recent research. The IRMS uses citizen scientists and innovative tools such as scat-detecting dogs to determine the presence and distribution of rare species.

2017 – 2019 --Through its Institute for Rare Mammal Studies in Michigan, the MWC initiated two separate projects to explore methods for possibly detecting the fisher, pine marten, and gray wolf in the northern Lower Peninsula, and the prairie vole in Southwest Michigan. In May of 2019, IRMS conducted a first-of-its-kind demonstration project in Emmet County with the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians that employed a scat detection dog. Seventy-eight samples were sent to laboratories for genetic analyses. The results to date included genetic identifications of fisher and pine martens in several areas. In September of 2019, MWC participated in live-trapping of endangered prairie voles in Kalamazoo County. Both the Emmet and Kalamazoo studies verified the existence of rare species. In a separate study, the MWC successfully extracted DNA of fishers, red fox, and gray wolf from tracks in snow and dirt. This study was also the first-of-its kind in the Midwest.

2022 – The MWC completed a multi-year project to establish the Bengel Fishing Village in a former borrow pit created during construction of I-69 in the 1970s. The work included stocking largemouth bass and trout in the excavated pond, installation of five docks and outfitting a pontoon with a pulley system to allow access to an island.

Welcome to the Bengel Fishing Village Dedication

Russ Bengel (1898-1984) was a nationally known and respected conservationist and the founder of the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy. He was an inspiration and a leader in the sportsman's world and has numerous awards named after him from various organizations including Ducks Unlimited, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, and Pheasants Forever. Russ' wife Ruth (Ingram) shared his deep love and enjoyment of the outdoors and was an equal partner in the commitment to conserving wildlife.

Russ' and Ruth's daughters, Jean B. Laughlin and Margaret B. Beckman, were also strong advocates and supporters of wildlife conservation. They both honored their parents' legacy with their stewardship and by instilling a passion for the outdoors in future generations.

The Bengel Fishing Village is inspired by the family's respect and appreciation for nature and their commitment to educate every generation on the importance of practicing conservation of natural resources and ecology.

Russ especially enjoyed teaching youth how to fish, so please pass it on!

Founding Donor: > Richard Beckman — husband of Margaret (Bengel) Beckman
Major Donors: > The Sheldon E. and Jean B. (Bengel) Laughlin Foundation
> Sharon and Sidney Warren — Gail and Jeffrey Fulgham
(Jeffrey and Sharon (lower right photo) are Margaret's children and the Bengel's grandchildren)

The guest of honor and major donor for the Village was Richard Beckman, husband of the late Margaret Bengel Beckman. Many other friends and family of the late Russell Bengel, a long with all Board Members and Pat Rusz, pictured here with Dick Beckman, were present at the event.

On August 19 of this year, the Conservancy dedicated the "Bengel Fishing Village at its 259-acre Bengel Wildlife Center in Bath. The project is aimed at providing fishing opportunities, with a youth education focus. In 2019 the Conservancy began stocking bass and trout for three years. The "Fishing Village" has a pontoon outfitted with a rope-pully system that allows access to an island with docks for additional fishing. More development is coming.



FUNDING THE VISION

The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy reflects the dream of one gradually becoming the vision of many. There are many ways you can support that vision and make it your own.

- ◆ Become a member and receive notification of special events and a year's subscription to our quarterly newsletter, The Wildlife Volunteer News.
- ◆ Make a leadership gift or multi-year pledge. Your donation can be allocated to specific types of projects or for general support of the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy.
- ◆ Make a gift of appreciated stock and receive significant tax benefits.
- ◆ Leave a legacy by making a planned gift, such as a Bequest, to designate all or a portion of your estate to support MWC.
- ◆ If you would like more information on sustaining the MWC vision, please contact John Ropp at 517-641-7677 ext. *813 or jropp@miwildlife.org.
- ◆ Donate property to MWC. Real estate gifts can be a great way to make sure natural areas are protected.



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