

**Michigan Wildlife Conservancy
Celebrating 25 Years of Success Thanks to You!**



Left: "The Way It Was," painted by Rod Lawrence, depicts a part of the Reithmiller Marsh owned by Russ Bengel for many years. Right: Russ Bengel (l) and frequent hunting companion Howard Sayre, Chief Field Officer of the Michigan Department of Conservation of Lansing, in circa 1945 photo. Russ grew up in an era of abundance and lived to witness the loss of more than half of Michigan's wetlands.

During the past 25 years, the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy (MWC) has become an important player in the restoration of our state's natural resources. The one person most responsible for that success was our founder, Russ Bengel. He had the vision, the financial resources, and the contacts to begin a new wildlife movement.

That movement started in 1980 as the Michigan Waterfowl Foundation and formally became the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation on September 1, 1982. One more name change occurred in 2003, to better characterize our efforts. Since that time, Russ' vision has been known as the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy.

Though many years have passed and the names may have changed, our mission has remained constant. We still follow the vision conceived by Russ Bengel more than a quarter of a century ago—to leave future generations a wildlife legacy of abundance and diversity.

Russ believed we could do that by being creative, efficient and making sure our work was additive—that is, making sure our dollars were not merely supplanting state or federal funds.

Russ Bengel was a private man. Few people knew this sensitive, dedicated and generous individual well. When I think of Russ, I am reminded of the words of Carlisle: "A great man shows his greatness by the way he treats little men." Russ Bengel treated everyone well and is remembered by his followers as a great man and one of the great Michigan conservationists of the 20th century.

Russ was born in Wisconsin in 1898, and moved to Jackson, Michigan as a young boy. Although smart and industrious, he only attended school through the 10th grade. As a teenager, he went to work to learn the business of business. While working full-time, he attended night school to learn accounting so he could take the Certified Public Accountant exam.

He learned his lessons well, and eventually became a partner in, and then sole owner of, General Products Corporation of Jackson, an automobile supply company.

Though Russ was a successful and well-respected businessman, his first love was the out-of-doors. Waterfowling was his favorite—a sport that also sensitized him to the loss of wetlands

throughout the continent.

Russ learned to hunt ducks as a teenager in the Jackson area from a commercial hunter, before the practice was prohibited. Growing up in those times of abundance and hunting every chance he had, Russ witnessed the miracle of nature firsthand and also the disappearance of half of Michigan's wetlands.

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**Be sure to visit us online at
www.miwildlife.org**



A Vision for the Ages

Things were so much simpler in 1982 when the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy was created. Habitat issues really had only one dimension—the loss of millions of acres of productive wildlife habitat. Problems that were so narrowly focused were much easier to address. We just worked to fix the acres in question or tried to create more habitat by planting, enhancing, or changing site conditions.

The climate for habitat restoration is changing. Literally. The last decade has brought new awareness of how global environmental conditions, such as the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere, will ultimately affect every wildlife species on earth. It is not a habitat question as we traditionally think of it, but more a matter of distribution and range changes for every species. The National Arbor Day Foundation has released a new Hardiness Zone



Things were much simpler in 1982, when the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation was founded and the predominant threat to wildlife was the loss of productive wildlife habitats.

map reflecting rising temperatures. Plants which grew in more southerly states are now gaining a foothold in Michigan. That's true for wild plants as well as ornamentals. As an organization we can restore surface features, but we must take collective action as individuals to slow global warming. We need to educate ourselves and accept change in our lives to minimize change in our environment.

Invasive exotic species are another issue that habitat conservationists did not even consider a decade ago. Exotics have been with us forever, but we've slowly adapted to them. Examples like carp, house sparrow, and lamprey are commonly known to all. But the new wave of exotics is coming rapidly and the implications much more ominous. Today's exotics aren't just higher order plants and animals, but viruses and microscopic organisms that can hide in a thimbleful of water.

Our Great Lakes are under siege today, with a new species arriving in the belly of a ship about every seven months. It is reported that the Great Lakes currently harbor 183 known exotic species.

What can the Conservancy do to keep

exotics out of the Great Lakes? Plenty! We have joined hands with nearly 100 other wildlife and conservation groups in the U.S. and Canada to protect the largest freshwater feature on the planet. In this case protecting the habitat requires that we become advocates on the Lakes' behalf. Collectively, the Healing Our Water Coalition has called for a ban on saltwater ships entering the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River system until the U.S. and Canada adopt an effective ballast water treatment program.

Terrestrial exotics have also become an immense problem in our state. Invasive plants pose a threat to wildlife as significant as that of habitat destruction. And these terrestrial exotics are smothering the landscape at a rapid pace. The Conservancy plans to respond by educating and training our citizens to recognize and eliminate exotic organisms in their communities.



The Conservancy uses the Bengel Wildlife Center as an incubator for new ideas to address wildlife's problems.

The Conservancy will increasingly use the Bengel Wildlife Center as an education and training facility to address all future threats that face the wild creatures of our state. We want the Bengel Wildlife Center to be the incubator for new ideas and future approaches to sustaining the environment.

The future challenges that face wildlife are hard to predict. We know only that there will be many, and some will be completely new to us. To succeed we will have to stay creative, efficient and nimble. But most of all we will have to be open to changing the way we operate, because what is being thrown at us is constantly changing. The Conservancy will be up to the task because we are not married to a single way of looking at problems. With the support of Michigan's citizens we are confident that the movement begun by Russ Bengel in 1982 will succeed in sustaining the wild creatures that enrich our lives for all time. 🍁

The Wildlife Volunteer

Michigan Wildlife Conservancy
6380 Drumheller Road
P.O. Box 393
Bath, Michigan 48808
Tel 517-641-7677 • Fax 517-641-7877
www.miwildlife.org
wildlife@miwildlife.org

The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy is a non-profit membership organization that restores and conserves fish, wildlife and habitat.

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The Great Lakes are being threatened like never before, with a new exotic species arriving by ship approximately every seven months.

Why we restore habitat A Wildlife Legacy

Since 1982, the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy (MWC) has been dedicated to restoring wildlife habitat across the state. One of the first questions those unfamiliar with our work often ask is “Why?”

The answer is simple.

Because we think it’s important to conserve and protect Michigan’s rich wildlife heritage so that our children’s children can know and experience the beauty and wonders of nature that have enriched our own lives.

As a supporter of the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy you are helping provide a wildlife legacy for future generations. Through your support, coupled with that from others, including from organizations that work locally, regionally, statewide or nationally, we’ve been able to create the kind of habitat wildlife needs to thrive.

Did you know that except for a few individuals in the Upper Peninsula and Wisconsin, the world’s entire population of a small, blue-gray and yellow sparrow-sized bird called the Kirtland’s warbler nests on jack pine plains in the northeast Lower Peninsula?

Researchers began counting singing males in 1951. A low of 167 statewide was recorded in 1987. For decades, wildlife biologists and foresters have used a combination of clear-cutting, controlled burning, and replanting to mimic the effects of wildfire that in turn creates the kind of habitat Kirtland warblers need.

Millions of jack pines have been planted on over 150,000 acres of state and federal lands under a management program aimed at providing habitat for warblers and timber on a 40 or 50-year rotation.

But no private property had ever been managed to encourage the growth of Michigan’s Kirtland warbler population. That is, until the MWC teamed up with Trout Unlimited’s (TU) Michigan Property Management Board to plant jack pines on property owned by TU along the Au Sable River.

As a result, in 2006, 27 singing males were counted on the 300 acres managed by TU. This summer, 23 singing males were identified. Conservationists consider the project an incredible success story—and, one that will help ensure that future generations of Michigan residents will be able to see and appreciate this bird that calls the Great Lakes State its home.

Wild turkeys are another species that were once feared in danger of extinction. Due to over-utilization and habitat loss, these native birds had disappeared from Michigan by the turn of the century.



In the mid 1980s, the MWC trapped wild turkeys in Vermont and Missouri. Today turkeys can be found nearly everywhere in Michigan.



The cougar is one of a handful of species trapped to receive help from the MWC. Today Michigan citizens are increasingly aware of this apex predator, thanks to the research and education of the Conservancy.



Young jack pine was planted on Trout Unlimited’s property.



Almost the entire world population of Kirtland’s warblers nests in the Northeast Lower Peninsula. The MWC partnered with Trout Unlimited to manage 300 acres for the little bird.

Today, wild turkeys are prospering throughout southern Lower Michigan. Their resurgence is due to a successful wild-strain restocking program that was undertaken by the Conservancy in collaboration with the Michigan Wild Turkey Federation, a state branch of the National Wild Turkey Federation. An increasing number of conservationists are recognizing this effort as one of our state’s greatest wildlife management successes.

What is one of the foremost threats to Michigan wildlife, today?

You might be surprised to learn that it is exotic, invasive species.

Buckthorn, honeysuckle, giant reed grass and purple loosestrife are among a host of exotic plants that are invading Michigan’s wetlands. They are causing wholesale changes in habitat that affect wildlife from song birds and small mammals to reptiles and amphibians, and in the process these and other invaders are also threatening the existence of some of our state’s rarest plants and wildflowers.

That’s why the MWC has joined forces with the Michigan Nature Association (MNA). Through a series of demonstration projects based on invasive species control research conducted by the Conservancy, the two groups are educating landowners on how to effectively curb the spread of these destructive trees and plants.

Preserving Michigan’s wildlife heritage often isn’t easy. Over the years, the MWC’s resolve to restore critical habitats and recognize rare or threatened natural resources has been tested many times.

In 1998, the Conservancy tackled a controversial issue when it began research on the cougar, or mountain lion. Prompted by the late Dan Robbins, a long-time conservation leader and past president of the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, the MWC spearheaded research on the big cats that were thought by many biologists to have vanished from Michigan in the early 1900s.

The Conservancy reviewed available evidence, conducted field research that pioneered the use of genetic studies on DNA in droppings to detect cougars, and developed management recommendations for the species.

In 2006, researchers from the Conservancy and Central Michigan University jointly published peer-reviewed science documenting a cougar population through DNA analysis of scats. The study, published in the *American Midland Naturalist*, marked the first scientific acceptance of multiple cougars east of the Mississippi River (outside Florida).

While most supporters of the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy may never see a Kirtland’s warbler or cougar in the wild or view one of the rare wild orchids that are thriving thanks to the Conservancy’s work at curbing invasive species, their satisfaction rests in knowing they have left something, some place, of great value. It’s a legacy we’re proud to leave. 🌿



We innovate to help wildlife! Projects On the Ground—That Work!

There are many organizations concerned with the state of our natural lands. So what sets the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy (MWC) apart from other organizations that may share similar interests? The MWC's dedication to practical, "on-the-ground" projects that work.

Since our inception, we have restored thousands of acres of wetlands and prairies, and countless miles of streams, rivers and creeks located in such geographically diverse areas as the Escanaba River in Michigan's Upper Peninsula to Paint Creek which flows through Oakland County, one of the most highly populated locations in the state.

Key to the MWC's success is the organization's dedication to mobilizing private and public sector resources as efficiently as possible. Instead of simply writing checks to another agency to carry out the work, the Conservancy acts as a "general contractor"—employing professionals who have the skills to design and supervise construction so that ideas to benefit wildlife can successfully become cost-effective finished projects.

What difference does our commitment to cost-effectiveness make?

The average cost of wetland restoration by the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy is about \$250 per acre. Some developers and government agencies spend up to \$100,000 per acre to create wetlands to replace those drained in the course of their work.

The result is not only that more wildlife habitat can be restored for less money, but the impact on Michigan wildlife is impressive as well.

Thanks in large part to wetland restoration, the number of nesting colonies of great blue herons has nearly doubled in Michigan during the past 30 years. Great egrets, another colonial wading bird, are gradually moving northward into Michigan in greater numbers.

Sandhill crane populations have increased dramatically from a low in the early 1900s. Michigan's Lower Peninsula now has about 700 nesting



A 70-acre wetland restoration near Edmore was completed by MWC, the Montcalm County Drain Commissioner and USFWS. It now provides refuge to thousands of ducks during migration.



The Bark River, in Delta County, received significant stream improvement work through a partnership with Delta County Wildlife Unlimited.

pairs, up from 43 in 1954 and 157 in 1973.

Bald eagle nesting pairs in Michigan started to increase in the 1980s, doubling their numbers over the previous decade and becoming more widespread. Just recently our national symbol was removed from the Federal Threatened Species list.

The Conservancy's first major project—the Milli-Ander Wetland Restoration, located on both sides of US-127 north of St. Johns at the Maple River State Game Area—has provided prime habitat for bald eagles, osprey and great blue herons for 23 years.

Trout are now flourishing in one of the few trout streams found in southeastern Michigan—Paint Creek—which flows out of Lake Orion, northeast of Pontiac. For years, lake surface water had spilled over a high dam into the creek making water temperatures in much of the stream simply too warm for trout to thrive.

The solution, designed and implemented by the MWC, was to install a bottom draw system that allows summertime release of cold water from the bottom of the lake into the stream. The project required major construction, including pushing a 30-inch steel casing through 90 feet of earth under M-24, a busy four-lane highway. Today, the Village of Lake Orion can manage cold water releases that benefit trout downstream, and can maintain desirable lake levels as well.

North of Edmore in rural Montcalm County, a couple of thousand ducks, more than 500 geese, and an abundance of muskrats are now calling a "hemi-marsh" (a patchy network of open water and a variety of emergent plants) home. The wetland was created by the Conservancy in partnership with the county drain commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Prior to restoration, the property consisted of two large basins occupying 70 acres that had been ineffectively drained via a system of dikes, ditches

and pumps in an attempt to make the land tillable. Later abandoned, the land lay idle for several years, flooded when beavers temporarily plugged drainage outlets, and then went dry when sections of the original basin dike failed. Needless to say, given the inhospitable conditions, wildlife abandoned the property.

Visit the site today, and you're welcomed with a chorus of sound. Thousands of frogs croak noisily; several species of ducks glide in and land effortlessly on the glassy stillness of the water, and other birds, everything from common red-winged blackbirds to less-often seen wading birds can be heard and seen.

"We're not sure how much waterfowl production occurred earlier in the year, but we suspect it was substantial. Even a pair of sandhill cranes hung around and may have nested in the marsh," said Calvin Beach, one of the owners of the property. "The restoration project the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy designed and implemented for us made a real difference—the difference is like night and day." 🌿



The Conservancy's jack-and-bore project placed a 90-foot section of steel pipe under M-24 so that cold bottom water from Lake Orion could flow into Paint Creek and allow trout to survive there.



The Milli-Ander Wetland Restoration along US 27, north of St. Johns, was a 200+ acre project which benefited eagles, osprey, great blue herons and hundreds of other species.

Join Us in Celebrating Our 25th Year! *Continued from page 12.*

◆ Become a wildlife artist with a lesson from Gijsbert ("Nick") van Frankenhuyzen, illustrator of the award-winning *Legends of Sleeping Bear* book and 15 other titles in the *Legends* series. You'll take home a drawing of your own, and learn what it's like to be a children's book artist.

◆ Enjoy some toe-tappin', knee-slappin', old-fashioned country music when some of mid-Michigan's most talented singers and musicians entertain *Harvest Social* guests with an authentic Old-Time Country Music Jamboree.

◆ Bring your family, invite your friends, and encourage your neighbors. MWC's *Harvest Social* is free and open to the public and will be held rain or shine.

◆ Check the MWC website (www.miwildlife.org) for schedule updates, or email us at wildlife@miwildlife.org and we'll send you a schedule of activities so you can plan your visit and not miss any of the fun that's planned.

ERIC SHARP, October 24

On Wednesday, October 24 at 7:00 p.m., award-winning outdoors writer, Eric Sharp of *The Detroit Free Press*, will be the featured speaker at a special lecture to be held at the MWC's Bengel Wildlife Center.



◆ Sharp's presentation will focus on the many threats facing the Great Lakes today, including the impact of invasive exotic species that are crippling our lakes, endangering our health, and burdening our economy.

◆ Sharp's presentation is free and open to the public. A special wine and cheese reception following his presentation will also be held in the Bengel Wildlife Center's Great Hall during which guests will have a chance to meet and talk with Sharp in more detail.

◆ Tickets for the reception are \$15 per person for the general public; *MWC members may purchase tickets to the reception for only \$10 each.*

◆ Seating is limited for both Sharp's presentation and the reception.

Advance reservations for both are required and can be made by calling Beth at the MWC office—(517) 641-7677 or by emailing wildlife@miwildlife.org.

The Bengel Wildlife Center is located just 10 minutes northeast of Lansing just off I-69 at 6380 Drumheller Road in Bath. Take the Webster Road exit north (0.6 miles) to Drumheller Road; turn right (east) for 0.6 miles and turn right, into our entrance. 🌿



We collaborate to maximize impact! A Statewide Organization with a Local Focus

Since its founding in 1982, the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy (MWC) has blended statewide concerns with a strong emphasis on locally-championed projects. Over the years, the Conservancy has conducted major projects in 67 of Michigan's 83 counties—from remote rural areas to our state's most densely populated areas.

The MWC's "go anywhere" approach to helping wildlife has been one of its trademarks—all the more remarkable when you consider that, unlike many other wildlife and conservation groups, the Conservancy has no "local chapters" to call on to help it identify and carry out its work.

"We've always favored a straight-forward method of soliciting project ideas," says Conservancy President David Haywood, of Lansing. "Our process for obtaining and reviewing proposals is efficient and free of red-tape, which enables us to respond that much more quickly to wildlife habitat restoration and conservation concerns."

A simple phone call to the MWC can set a project in motion. There are no requirements for lengthy written proposals or cumbersome budgets, though the Conservancy can provide a brief questionnaire that is helpful in soliciting the kind of information needed to quantify and evaluate project requests.

To ensure that worthy candidate projects are identified, the Conservancy works with many



Ted Piwowar, MWC Southwest Michigan Team Leader, restores a wetland by plugging a ditch on private property in Allegan County.



locally-focused groups including the chapters of four organizations—the Michigan Duck Hunters Association (MDHA), Pheasants Forever, Trout Unlimited, and the Michigan Wild Turkey Federation (MWTF)—which have co-sponsored many key projects with the Conservancy.

Adept at raising funds for habitat restoration, all four organizations are also widely known for promoting a "hands-on" approach to enhancing natural resources. Their members are often seen rolling up their sleeves to help complete both small and large-scale projects—a level of enthusiasm that's appreciated and sometimes critical to the project's success.

Individual landowners have also emerged as local champions for wildlife, providing important habitat through the Conservancy's Michigan Private Wetlands Program (MPWP).

Launched in 1991 to utilize volunteer support and other private-sector resources to restore wetlands on private properties, the MPWP began as a pilot project in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Volunteer "Wetlanders" were trained to help identify and implement habitat restorations. The focus was on restoring shallow water areas for wildlife by plugging small ditches or underground tiles.

Initially, 33 Wetlanders began assisting with restorations in a 45-county tier of southern Michigan. Led by Conservancy and FWS staff, the volunteers worked in "Wetlands Conservation Teams," maximizing the impact of the professional biologists and resource managers involved with the program by making landowner contacts and performing preliminary investigations at restoration sites.

MPWP volunteers responded to more than 100 landowner requests for assistance, and in six month's time, 80 wetland restorations averaging about 2.5 acres each had been completed.

In 1992, the Conservancy increased its Wetlander corps to 60 and expanded the program statewide. As a result, Conservancy staff and volunteers completed 50 wetland restorations totaling about 900 acres. Since then, more than 5,000 acres of wetlands located on private property have since been restored through this unique and successful program.

Though the MWC continues to receive cooperation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,



An egret, blue-winged teal and mallards were flushed from an MWVC restoration in Shiawassee County.

Photo courtesy, David Olds, Lansing State Journal.



the Michigan Private Wetlands Program is staffed solely by the Conservancy with support from other private sector conservation organizations, including such groups as local chapters of the Michigan Duck Hunters Association.

Fish and wildlife in our state need everyone's help, and those willing to identify habitat problems and offer solutions can make a big difference.

For more information about how you can work with the MWC's private wetlands restoration program, see the related article below. To find out more about how an organization to which you belong can get involved, see the article at the right. ✨



The late Marvin Schlicher, of Laingsburg, cleans the water control structure for a 4.8-acre wetland restored on his property in Shiawassee County.



Do you own land you'd like to improve as habitat for wildlife?

Here's how the Conservancy's private landowner wetland restoration program works—

Any property owner is eligible to participate in the Conservancy's Michigan Private Wetlands Program, and participants are not required to allow public access or give up any property rights.

In most cases, participating landowners get the work done at a minimal cost, with the Conservancy paying all costs over a certain amount.

The landowner is asked to sign a 10-year agreement which states that installed water control devices or earthen ditch plugs will not be removed by the property owner during the period of the agreement.

For more information or discuss the project you'd like to propose, contact the MWC at (517) 641-7677 or email: wildlife@miwildlife.org.

The Private Wetlands Program restores wetlands on private property anywhere in the state.









Is your group or organization interested in conserving habitat?

▼ Here's how to get started.

Many of the Conservancy's projects begin with a simple one or two paragraph letter from a group asking for assistance in finding ways to enhance habitat in their area.

Groups with previous experience or expertise in habitat restoration are often asked by the Conservancy to provide an informal written proposal for evaluation. Information requested from potential project cooperators usually includes:

-  location and description of the project
-  an indication of the fish and wildlife species to benefit
-  project cost
-  a statement of what is requested from the Conservancy
-  an indication of the extent of local commitment to the project
-  an explanation of the anticipated benefits and possible detrimental effects (tradeoffs)

Most of the Conservancy's cooperative projects are funded on a match basis. That is, a local group or groups, perhaps with assistance from a statewide organization, takes responsibility for at least half the project cost.

The deadline for major proposals is June 15th for projects that will commence the following the calendar year. Funding decisions are generally made no later than September 1.

For more information, contact Dr. Pat Ruzs, MWC Director of Wildlife Programs, at 517/641-7677 or email wildlife@miwildlife.org.





We're focused Helping People Help Wildlife

In the beginning, the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy (MWC) had a singleness of purpose: To restore thousands of acres of drained wetlands across the state. Perhaps the first major programming decision made by the MWC's board back in 1982 was to broaden the organization's mission to include restoration and conservation of all fish and wildlife habitats—a focus that continues to be the Conservancy's primary mission today.

The MWC has made remarkable progress in restoring wildlife habitat across Michigan, all the more remarkable given the small size of the Conservancy's staff. Our accomplishments were made possible by working collaboratively with other groups and individuals to leverage the Conservancy's knowledge and expertise. The result has been a broad impact on habitat for wildlife.

For decades, drain commissioners were blamed for destroying streams, wetlands and even uplands, to facilitate farming and land development. Though abuses did occur, many drain commissioners were interested in reducing the impact on the environment and wildlife, including Arden

Pierson, Clinton County Drain Commissioner.

Pierson realized that to do a better job, drain commissioners would need technical assistance from the kinds of environmental and wildlife organizations that were criticizing their work. Pierson asked MWC staff to tour several of his projects and received recommendations about such issues as contouring, plant selection, use of fire as a tool, and woody plant management. After implementing these techniques, Pierson realized that what he learned could also be of great value to other Michigan drain commissioners.

Pierson's enthusiasm led to the development of a day-and-a-

half-day training seminar for drain commissioners in the spring of 1993 on how to develop wildlife-friendly practices. Seventy-nine drain commissioners and staff from every corner of the state attended. To this day, the Conservancy continues to train and assist drain commissioners statewide, including providing funding for wildlife improvements.

In 1999, the Conservancy launched another educational program: the creation of wetland and prairie habitats at 13 nature centers located across Michigan. The Conservancy restored or created wetlands and/or prairies at each of the centers so that these habitats could be used as teaching environments. These teaching habitats provided a first-time experience for many visitors, where they were able to learn first-hand about the impor-



The Conservancy recognizes the importance of education and has restored habitats at the Bengel Wildlife Center, schools, nature centers, and zoos, creating educational opportunities for children.



tance of wetlands and prairies to wildlife.

Helping young people learn more about the natural world and appreciate the value

of wildlife is one of the primary goals of another program—Annie's BIG Nature Lesson. Launched in 2003 by the Conservancy and funded by the Mason Family of Kalamazoo as a tribute to the memory of their daughter, Anne, this annual educational program enables 40 classrooms of mid-Michigan youngsters to learn about nature first-hand by attending classes on-site at the Conservancy's Bengel Wildlife Center or one of three other nature centers.

Whether it's restoring wildlife habitat across the state, training those whose jobs involve altering or impacting the land, or teaching others about wildlife and their habitat, the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy's mission remains the same: to help people help wildlife so that future generations of Michigan citizens will enjoy the same wildlife heritage we inherited.

Your continued financial support makes our work possible. You can help us continue to help people help wildlife by making a charitable gift to the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy today. Simply complete the form on page 12 and return it with your tax-deductible contribution to the MWC. ✪



Patrick Lindemann, Ingham County Drain Commissioner, is one of many who have restored wetlands along county drains with the Conservancy.



The county drain system has tremendous potential for enhancing wildlife values.



We're statewide! The Go-Anywhere approach

The tremendous variety of projects funded by the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy (MWC) testifies to the organization's willingness to invest its resources where they are most needed. The Conservancy has helped nearly all species of Michigan wildlife—from the rare and delicate Karner blue butterfly to the lumbering moose.

The MWC takes advantage of opportunities. We evaluate potential projects on their overall merits, keeping the focus on cost-effective, ecologically-sound habitat projects, rather than on management of a particular species.

In the early years of the Conservancy, Michigan, like the rest of the country, was mired in a deep recession. Money for fish and wildlife projects was disappearing. So, creative ways to pool resources were critical. In its first seven years, the MWC worked with more than 50 cooperating

agencies and groups.

Wetlands were restored on state game areas with names familiar to many conservationists: the Shiawassee River, Maple River, Sturgeon Sloughs, Crow Island, Allegan, Borculo, Houghton Lake Flats, Muskegon, Nayanquing, and Pointe Mouillee, among others.

"Blue-ribbon" trout streams like the Au Sable, Jordan and Manistee Rivers also received much-needed attention. In fact, the Conservancy's Michigan Trout Stream Restoration Project which improved eight rivers in both the Upper and Lower Peninsulas came at a time when there was no similar work being done anywhere in the state.

It was largely the brainchild of then Conservancy President Dave Smethurst, of Gaylord, and eventually teamed the MWC with Trout Unlimited and several other sportsmen's clubs. It was an impor-

tant catalyst for work that is now carried out by various Resource Conservation and Development Area Councils across the state.

As more public funds gradually became available, the Conservancy shifted its focus onto private lands. A multi-county Forest Wildlife Project provided help for private landowners who were interested in improving their lands for deer, turkeys, ruffed grouse and other upland species. The Rights-of-Way for Wildlife Program targeted habitat improvements on often-overlooked roadsides and easements owned by utility companies and drain commissions.

Today, the Conservancy still employs this "go anywhere" approach, working on both public and private lands. The organization takes on projects that restore the quality of wetlands, lakes, rivers, streams and prairies while working collaboratively with other organizations and private landowners in order to leverage and maximize its impact statewide. It's a strategy that has stood the test of time. 🌿

Celebrating 25 Years of Success!

Continued from Page 1.

Sometime in the 1930s, Russ and his hunting companions purchased 400 acres of the Reithmiller Marsh, near Waterloo. Ducks went there by the thousands, even diving ducks.

The property was a duck hunter's paradise until the Portage River was dredged and deepened in the 1940s. With this man-made change came a loss of water levels in all the adjacent wetlands, including Russ' favorite duck hunting spot. Russ would get a tear in his eye when he'd tell about the way the marsh used to be. "Thousands of birds used to use this marsh," he would say, "including cans," his favorite duck species (canvabacks). "Now they are gone, almost entirely. We have to do something about it!"

I think that his memory of the habitat loss at the Reithmiller Marsh gave birth to his ideas about the need for a citizen organization to restore wetlands damaged by man. Until his death, he spoke with me often about restoring water levels in the Reithmiller Marsh.

In 1940, Russ was appointed by the Governor to serve on the Michigan Conservation Commission. Though he served as a Commissioner for six years and was involved in all the important natural resources issues of the day, one accomplishment stood out above the rest—the state's purchase of the Pointe Mouillee Shooting Club.

Russ led the fight on the Commission to acquire this famous private duck hunting club which was located on a 2,600-acre marsh north of Monroe. The club wanted to sell the property to the state, but no funds were available.

Russ argued, cajoled, and pressured other commissioners and legislators to acquire the land—the best-known duck hunting area on the Michigan waters of Lake Erie. It took several months, and Russ had to compromise with Upper

Peninsula mining interests, but he prevailed, and thousands of outdoor enthusiasts since have been able to enjoy the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area as a result.

Russ wasn't the only member of the Bengel family who was fond of the outdoors. Russ met his future wife, Ruth Ingram, of Jackson, while horseback riding at the county fairgrounds. They were married in 1926, and raised two daughters—Jean Laughlin of Jackson, and Margaret Beckman of North Carolina.

Russ and Ruth fished together often, both in Michigan and Canada. Every spring and fall they traveled north of the border for walleye and trout. Russ used to say with a grin that his wife could out-fish him any day.

Russ passed away in February 1984, and Ruth followed in June of 1986. Neither was ever able to see a Michigan Wildlife Conservancy project completed, but they had the satisfaction of knowing the endowment they had created was helping launch the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy.

Other wildlife enthusiasts like Tom Anderson, Dean Brodberg, Keith Groty, Dan Robbins, and others who followed made sure the organization got off the ground and stayed the course over the years.

Since 1982, the Conservancy has restored more than 8,200 acres of wetlands, 2,500 acres of prairies and grasslands, and dozens of miles of trout streams—the kind of habitat Michigan wildlife depends on to prosper.

The Conservancy's success is a testament to a great man's vision, and the support of thousands of people like you, along the way. As we enter our second quarter century of helping wildlife, let us remember Russ Bengel, the great man whose dreams we pursue. 🌿

*Dennis Fijalkowski
Executive Director*



FUNDING THE VISION

Will tomorrow's children have the chance to experience the call of a loon?

To witness the beauty of a field of Karner blue butterflies? To know the special wild places that we have had the privilege to enjoy?

As the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy continues to work to ensure that future generations will be able to inherit the wildlife legacy we have inherited, there are many tangible ways that you can help fund our vision of conserving Michigan's wildlife heritage.



It is our responsibility to conserve Michigan's resources for future generations.

Sustain the MWC through Your Membership

Members are the lifeblood of the MWC! Your annual membership gift and additional contributions throughout the year help sustain our efforts. As a member, you receive notification of special events, a membership card, a year's subscription to our bi-monthly newsletter, and email updates about MWC developments and activities.

Make a Leadership Gift

The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy welcomes gifts of \$1,000 or more via a five-year pledge period. For example, the donor can choose to make a \$5,000 contribution over five years, paying \$1,000 per year on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis. Pledges can be allocated to specific habitat needs, per the donor's interests, if desired, or used for general support.



Take Stock

A gift of appreciated stock is an excellent way to support the MWC and it can offer significant tax benefits to you. For example, to offset anticipated capital gains taxes from stocks or mutual funds you own, consider donating shares of appreciated stock or mutual funds to the MWC. Not only will you avoid paying taxes on your gain, your donation will be considered a charitable deduction for you!

Protect a Special Place

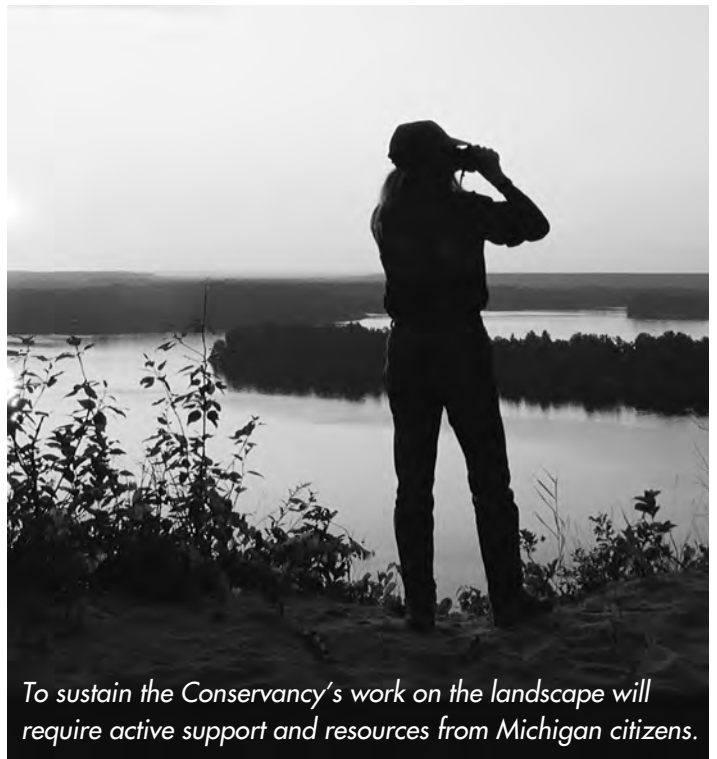
You or your family may own a piece of property that is very special to you. Property donated to the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy can be protected forever by a land stewardship program designed by the MWC specifically to meet your needs. Real estate gifts are a decisive way to make sure your natural places are taken care of forever.



Leave a Legacy

Your love for wildlife and the great outdoors can live on in perpetuity when you make a planned gift to support the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy. Bequests are the most common type of planned gifts enabling you to designate all or a portion of your estate to benefit the MWC. Bequests can easily be created as part of your will or living trust or be added as a codicil to an existing will or as an amendment to a living trust.

If you have already remembered the MWC in your will, please let us know so that we can thank and recognize you accordingly. If you'd like more information on how to leave a legacy of your own or any of the many ways you can help us sustain the MWC vision, please contact our Development Director, Jayne Marsh, at 517/641-7677 or email jayne@miwildlife.org. 🌿



To sustain the Conservancy's work on the landscape will require active support and resources from Michigan citizens.



William M. Ciesla, Forest Management International



WHAT IS IT?

The first correct identification of our mystery object in the last issue of *The Wildlife Volunteer* came from Emily Kemnitz.

“It’s called squawroot. It looks like pinecones. A parasite without chlorophyll, it grows on oak roots (and other hardwoods) like beechdrops grow on beech roots. Indian pipe, also without chlorophyll, grows on decaying matter. I’ve seen all three: they look like ghosts in the woods.” ❁

Special thanks to the following individuals and/or groups for recently making a gift in support of the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Bill Atman | Randy and Rhonda Egtvedt | Jobie Patrick |
| Chelsie Bemis | Cindy Fairbanks | Douglas and Joann Patterson |
| Richard and Laverne Binder | Jeffrey and Gail Fulgham | Steve and Candy Petrick |
| Bill Botti | Mark and Debbie Hilliard | Ralph Powell |
| Mark and Debra Carlson | Roy and Jule Hoffman | Harold and Carol Rappold |
| Ron Champion | Doug and Marie Holem | Karl and Sylvia Rundquist |
| Virginia Cooper | David Horton | Mark and Mary Shantz |
| Maxine Corder | Leslie Keys | Gerald and Janice Stetler |
| Edward and Marilyn Couture | Robert and Audrey Lemon | Marilyn Szost |
| Debra Cramer | John and Marcia Lipps | Frederick and Roberta Tebbets |
| Michael and Connie DePolo | Dorothy Livezey | Carol Warfield |
| Ronald and Kandy Dixon | Suzanne Lowe | Patty and Lee Werner |
| Larry and Jennie Dorin | Clyde H. McDaniel, Jr. | Curtis Wright |
| William Earl | John and Cynthia Nixon | |
| Robert and Lottie Eddy | Karl Ott | |



Thank you to Charla Atherton, Denise Elliott, Judy Kindel and Carey Loveland for their continued work in the Conservancy’s Bengal Wildlife Center gardens.

*Happy Birthday to
Ron Champion*
From Emily Champion

*In memory of
Bud Rabley*
From Sheldon & Jean Laughlin

*In memory of
Lois Washburn*
From Sheldon & Jean Laughlin

*In memory of
Don Tyler*
From Jim & Charlotte Portz

You can honor the memory of a loved one, friend, colleague or neighbor by making a memorial gift to the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy in their name.

The Conservancy will acknowledge your gift and notify the honoree’s family or designated representative of your thoughtful tribute. Memorial gifts help support the Conservancy’s on-going efforts to conserve wildlife and wildlife habitat throughout the state.

To make a gift in honor or memory of another, simply complete and return the donation form to the right.

Thank you to the many fine photographers who have generously allowed us to use their art to enliven the pages of *The Wildlife Volunteer* over the years. Special thanks to Carl R. Sams II, Jeanne Stoick, Mark Carlson, Mike Moran, Scott Calkins, Gary Nelkie, Ron St. Germain and Myles Willard.



Honorary/Memorial Gift Option

I would like to make my gift in: (Check one) Honor of Memory of
Honoree’s Name _____

Please inform the following family member/s or significant others of my honorary/memorial gift:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Please send acknowledgement and receipt for tax purposes to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Join Us in Celebrating Our 25th Year!

Mark your calendar, and plan to join us for two very special events this fall designed to help honor the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy's (MWC) 25th anniversary year!

HARVEST SOCIAL, September 29

Fun for the whole family will be on tap, Saturday, September 29, from noon to 4:00 p.m. when the Conservancy hosts its annual *Harvest Social*, at the MWC headquarters, located at the Bengel Wildlife Center (BWC) in Bath.

◆ Meet Rob and Laura Sams, creators of the heart-warming video based on the popular children's book, *Lost in the Woods* and learn how they bring the lives of animals to life through the use of imagination and creativity.

◆ Explore the BWC grounds by taking a habitat hike or a bog tour. Find out how animals adapt to differing habitats to survive from wildlife behavior expert, Dennis Laidler, Education Curator for the Potter Park Zoo.

Continued on page 5.



See page 5 for more events celebrating MWC's 25th Anniversary!



Michigan Wildlife Conservancy

6380 Drumheller Rd. • P.O. Box 393 • Bath, Michigan 48808
517-641-7677 • www.miwildlife.org

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Your Support Makes a Difference! Join Us Today!



Your gift to the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy does more than help us conserve wildlife and wildlife habitat across the state. It's an expression of your belief in the importance of maintaining the wildlife legacy we inherited for our children and our children's children.

YES, I want to help. Here's my tax-deductible contribution in the amount of:

\$40 \$75 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

Email Address _____

Enclosed is my check made payable to: **Michigan Wildlife Conservancy**

Please charge my contribution to my: VISA MasterCard Discover American Express

Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Mail to: Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, PO Box 393, Bath, MI 48808

MWC's 25th Anniversary Celebration



Rob (above) and Laura Sams will present the making of *Lost in the Woods*, the acclaimed children's video, as part of MWC's 25th Anniversary Celebration, on Saturday, September 29.