



SUMMER / FALL 2023
ISSUE 82



Dear Friends,

As we approach the end of this year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the past twelve months. It has been a noteworthy year for our organization, thanks to the dedicated efforts of our volunteers, board, and supporters who made our habitat restoration projects and land protection efforts possible. It's a year to be proud of, and I'd like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for making it possible.

The impact we have on the local environment is greater than us. Our volunteers have been the driving force behind our success, committing their time, energy, and passion to the cause. Their unwavering dedication has allowed us to make a tangible difference in the communities and habitats we strive to improve.

Natural land conservation is at the forefront of what Little Forks does, and our habitat restoration projects have enhanced and expanded areas for wildlife to thrive. Our pollinator plantings at the Averill Preserve are teeming with a broad array of insect species. Little Forks is a small but mighty organization, and maintaining these habitats requires the collaboration of our field staff, countless volunteers, and community partners.

Securing critical funding to complete the purchase of Nelson Woods was made possible this year with the generosity of individual donors, local foundations, and business partners. Little Forks' future conservation efforts will be stronger due to new corporate partnerships established this year. The significance of these achievements cannot be understated, and they are a testament to the hard work and dedication of our board members and staff.

Looking ahead to the new year, I am filled with optimism and excitement. We have an opportunity to build on this year's successes by working to maintain and enhance the natural areas entrusted to our care. We hope to continue expanding our impact and engaging even more volunteers and supporters. Each endeavor we undertake to care for our preserves and private conservation easements enriches the community and helps to provide more opportunities for exploration and appreciation of the natural world. My hope is that you take at least a few moments each season to explore the splendor of nature on our preserves. Your engagement in what we do helps further our mission, and we thank you for your dedication and continuing support of The Little Forks Conservancy.

Warmest regards,

Elan Lipschitz

Executive Director
Little Forks Conservancy



Conservation@Work in Our Community

Little Forks has a variety of conservation programs that it provides to the community.

One of the Conservancy's most popular is Conservation@Home. However, many people may not be aware of the Conservancy's business equivalent, Conservation@Work.

The goal of the Conservation@Work program is to encourage business owners to adopt conservation practices that will reduce their environmental footprint and contribute to a more sustainable future. Such conservation practices can help businesses lower maintenance costs while supporting clean water, rich soil, and healthy wildlife. Little Forks' staff

will provide a free site visit and can help identify ways that the business can conserve nature at their site.

Nature Niche, a local nature gift and supply store, recently became Conservation@Work certified. Martha and her staff have been great stewards of the environment, focusing a lot of time and effort into transforming their workplace into a space that benefits the environment and our local wildlife.

For more information or to set up a site visit, contact Shelby Gentle at sgentle@littleforks.org or at 989-835-4886 ext. 103.



Partnerships for Conservation

Partnerships are key to helping us protect and improve our local lands. In our community, it's our local corporations and businesses that are making a huge impact in helping us restore habitat, haul away debris, clean up rivers, and offer their expertise.

At our new Nelson Preserve, Dow's Marketing Interns cleaned up Nelson Woods with over 3,200 pounds of debris removed. This group of Dow volunteers from all over the country were able to experience first hand the nature we have protected and how their actions make a difference.

Another corporate group that volunteered their time was International Flavors and Fragrances. They spent an afternoon removing invasive shrubs from a pollinator planting at our

Averill Preserve ensuring this area provides habitat for a variety of native bees and butterflies.

These are a few examples of how businesses are an important part of our conservation work. We are thankful to these organizations and individuals for their time, excitement for the work, and helping us care for these special spaces.

If you have a group that is interested in volunteering, reach out to Benjamin at bvandyke@littleforks.org or at 989-835-4886 ext. 104 to see how you can help out.



1,000 Acres Protected

The Little Forks Conservancy celebrated a significant milestone in our mission to protect and preserve the natural beauty of the region this past year. After years of dedicated work and community support, we achieved the remarkable feat of conserving 1,000 acres of nature preserves.

The 1,000-acre milestone marked a significant step in ensuring the preservation of vital ecosystems and native species in the region. Our conservation work is in great shape thanks to our hard-working staff, committed board of directors, remarkable volunteers, and our strong regional partnerships.



Several of the Conservancy's nature preserves contributed to reaching this milestone, each playing a unique role in the conservation effort:

Averill Preserve

This central preserve served as our first nature preserve with a diverse range of habitats, including woodlands, river shoreline, and open meadows.

Riverview Natural Area

Along the Tittabawassee River, this property provides habitat for a wide variety of bird species, making it a hotspot for birdwatchers. The mature forests and vernal pools create an outdoor wonder for all visitors.

George and Sue Lane Preserve

With the North Branch of the Cedar River, this cold water river is home to a healthy trout population. The trails wind through forests and fields to provide a serene retreat throughout the year.

Nelson Woods

The Conservancy's newest nature preserve has a stunning hardwood forest with mature maple trees which are breathtaking in autumn.

The Ponds

A great place to learn to fish, just a short drive from Midland. Visitors can also watch the variety of migratory waterfowl or songbirds that pass through and make this property home.

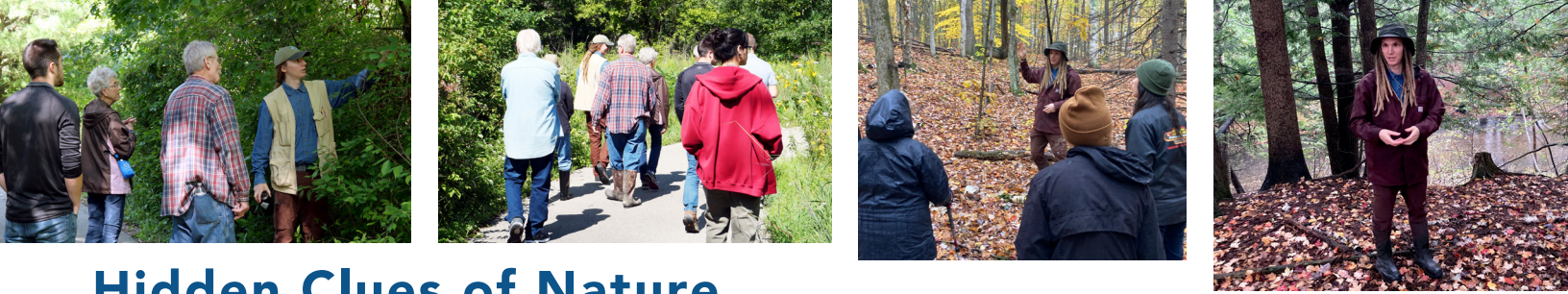
Forestview Natural Area

Winding path that leads visitors through a picturesque forest to experience the calm of nature.

The achievement of conserving 1,000 acres is not only a cause for celebration but also a call to further action. The Little Forks Conservancy continues to work tirelessly to protect and manage these preserved lands, ensuring they remain a home for native flora and fauna, a place for outdoor recreation, and an educational resource for the community.

The 1,000-acre milestone was a testament to what can be achieved when communities and organizations work together to create lasting conservation. It highlighted the enduring importance of preserving the natural beauty and ecological diversity of the Midland region, ensuring that these lands would be cherished and protected for generations to come.





Hidden Clues of Nature

Little Forks cares for hundreds of acres of woodlands which have a rich history, deeply intertwined with the state's development and natural heritage.

This year, Little Forks partnered with Joe Nash, District Forester for Clare and Gladwin Counties, for two forest-themed hikes. One hike, held at the Averill Preserve, focused on forest management. Joe discussed the history of Michigan's forests and how they have undergone significant transformations over the years. Throughout the hike, Joe explained strategies and techniques foresters use to preserve the delicate balance between ecological conservation, economic development, and recreational opportunities.

The second hike, based on the topic of forest forensics, was held at the George and Sue Lane Preserve. Joe led attendees on a tour of the preserve, where he showed them how to use features of the landscape to learn more about an area. He explained how clues such as old stumps, unusual growth patterns, evidence of past disturbances, and fire scars are just some of the tools that can be used to understand the history of the woods.

The better we can understand our forests, the more we can be better stewards of this wonderful resource.

Boardwalk Additions at Riverview Natural Area

Over the past few years we have been working to install boardwalks at the north loop at Riverview Natural Area. Thanks to the help and talents of our dedicated volunteers, four new boardwalks have been constructed.

Zach Pider built 130 feet of the boardwalk as an Eagle Scout project with the help of other scouts from Troop 763. The other three boardwalks were completed by long-time Little Forks volunteers, and Lily, our Huron Pines AmeriCorps member. These three boardwalks were funded thanks to a local donor who enjoys getting out at our

nature preserves and said, "We feel that LFC provides a valuable service to our community and is a great steward of our contributions. I am also excited about being able to walk that loop in all conditions without wading".

A huge thanks to our local donor and volunteers making our preserves as great as they can be.

If you are interested in helping fund a local preserve project contact Elan at elipschitz@littleforks.org or 989-835-4486 ext. 102.



Scarecrows Scavenger Hunt Fun!

You may have seen scarecrows around Riverview Natural Area this October, for a special Scarecrow Scavenger Hunt event!

Scarecrows were re-purposed from Dow Gardens "Growin' Gardeners" program by Dow High's Go Green Club. Students in the environmental club re-purposed old clothing and other materials to give these scarecrows a second life!

Scarecrows were placed throughout the main loop of Riverview Natural Area, along with educational signage to teach trail users about aspects of the nature preserve. Users who participated in the hunt also had the chance to win a nature gift bag, by posting a picture to their social media using the tag #ScarecrowsRNA2023.

Congratulations to our winners, Stacey and Aleshia, and to everyone who had a chance to visit Riverview this fall season and learn a little bit about the natural ecosystem that surrounds them. Keep an eye out for our scarecrows to return next fall.



Remembering Ed

Ed Elliott was a champion for conservation in Midland County and a founding board member of Little Forks Conservancy.

Ed spend many hours working to improve our Averill Preserve with friend and fellow conservationist, Glenn Sanford. Ed and Glenn helped create the wildflower meadow at the western portion of the Averill Preserve. We will be forever grateful for the many hours he spent improving our properties and helping grow our organization. Ed will be missed.

"If I didn't have all these people working with me, I wouldn't have got anything done." – Ed Elliott



Support Our Work!

When you donate to the Little Forks Conservancy you are helping to inspire the next generation of conservationists. We cannot do this without your support.

Use the QR code and please consider donating at littleforks.org/donate. Thank you!





LITTLE FORKS CONSERVANCY
125 MCDONALD ST
MIDLAND, MI 48640
989-835-4886
LITTLEFORKS.ORG

Memorials & Honorary

In Memory of Ed Elliott
Sandra Berger
Daryl and Carol Landis
Bill and Carol Gibson
Denny Brooks
Dan and Linda Cline
Linda Bakke
Carol Sanford
Pam Blust

In Memory of Tammy Talcott Doyle
Tim and Deb Broderick

In Memory of Mary Teresa Bristol
Tim and Deb Broderick

Board of Directors

President | Paddy Hobohm
Vice President | Mary Haslam
Treasurer | Nolan Gay
Secretary | Ryan Weiss
At-Large | Steve Wilkowski
Susan Erhardt
Roger Garner
Dolores Porte
Nick Wyant

Staff

Executive Director | Elan Lipschitz, elipschitz@littleforks.org
Land Conservation Specialist | Shelby Gentle, sgentle@littleforks.org
Huron Pines AmeriCorps Member | Lily Kelsey, lkelsey@littleforks.org
Preserve and Volunteer Steward | Benjamin VanDyke, bvandyke@littleforks.org



The Little Forks Conservancy is an Accredited Land Trust, meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

The Little Forks Conservancy permanently protects and improves natural environments in mid-Michigan by leading and inspiring actions that conserve vital habitats and waterways for the benefit of our entire community.