



Native bee balm on the Butterfly Preserve. Photo by Mike Dougherty

## Butterfly Preserve Continues to Grow, Thanks to You

Both pollinators and people have been buzzing around and working hard on Blue Heron's Butterfly Preserve, which safeguards the endangered Poweshiek skipperling butterfly. In the spring, volunteers constructed a scenic viewing area overlooking the Shiawassee Valley. The overlook was named in honor and memory of supporter Edith Mayer Cord and will be used for bird watching groups, student gatherings, and a public viewpoint. Blue Heron plans to create more benches, trails, another scenic overlook at the edge of the fen, interpretative signage, and other amenities to provide more opportunities

for public accessibility, educational programs, and naming rights that honor supporters and legacy donors. In the summer, Cohl Beaudoin along with his Boy Scout Troop 192 came out to promote habitat for herps—the collective name for reptiles and amphibians—for his Eagle Project. They placed hollowed out logs in the woods for turtles and basking stones on the hillside for snakes. Thanks to extensive invasive plant removal and replanting natives throughout the year, the Butterfly Preserve now offers suitable habitat for the Poweshiek skipperling butterfly and other rare species.



Historic photo of the Butterfly Preserve on Eaton Road

## BACKSTORY

The Butterfly Preserve is a 30.7-acre parcel of land purchased by Blue Heron from three land owners with funding from campaign donors. Within this preserve is butterfly habitat, a prairie fen wetland in the Shiawassee River's floodplain, and an upland area of rare oak barren habitat once used as pasture in the 1800s.

Scientists from the Poweshiek Skipperling International Partnership estimated that there are only 100 Poweshiek skipperling butterflies living in two places in North America. One of those places happens to be right in our backyard in Davisburg, MI. This particular area also happens to be part of the headwaters of the Shiawassee River; preserving it also protects the quality of water at its source, a key part of our mission.

Upon recognizing this opportunity to protect an endangered species on a high priority ecosystem in our service area, Blue Heron kicked off the multi-year campaign *Big Help for a Little Butterfly* in 2019 with an overall goal of raising \$275,000. By 2021, we successfully raised \$150,000 with generous support from The Carls Foundation, Consumers Energy, and private donors. These contributions funded the initial purchase of acreage and land stewardship.

Campaign marketing continued into 2022. Our supporters stepped up to the challenge and donations were matched by the Americana and David W. Elliot Foundations and the Jung and Petrosky families. By 2023 the goal was successfully reached! Today, Blue Heron uses your generous gifts to maintain and ensure the perpetuity of ecosystem quality for the Poweshiek skipperling and other valued inhabitants of the Butterfly Preserve.

## Current and forecasted Butterfly Preserve projects

- Construct hibernacula for massasauga rattlesnakes
- Establish "bee hotels" on selected trees
- Enhance habitat for box turtles and snakes
- Upgrade the reptile barrier at the entrance to safeguard herps
- Create a butterfly puddling site near the trail
- Extend the trail to the wetland's edge using logs and rocks for erosion prevention, along with a rope handrail
- Build a small viewing platform at the fen's edge
- Enhance public access by upgrading entrance signage, marking the parking area, and improve traffic safety at the entrance
- Improve the birding experience by constructing a bench, installing interpretive signs about birding, and connecting visitors to Merlin Bird ID and our website
- Expand protected land by acquiring neighboring properties through purchases or easements
- Increase biodiversity by eliminating invasive plants, conducting controlled burns, and planting native species



# A message from the new Executive Director

*Dear Friends of Blue Heron Headwaters,*

*I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for the warm welcome I've received since joining Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy as your Executive Director. Your kindness, enthusiasm, and passion for our mission has been truly inspiring. It's clear that this organization is built on a strong foundation of community, and I'm honored to be a part of it.*

*As I've gotten to know many of you, I've been struck by the dedication and commitment that each of you bring to our shared vision of protecting the natural beauty of our region. From the volunteers who tirelessly give their time and energy, to the supporters who advocate for our cause, you are the heart and soul of this organization. Your efforts are what make our work possible, and I can't thank you enough.*

*Looking ahead, I'm filled with excitement for the future of Blue Heron Headwaters. Together, we have the opportunity to make a lasting impact on the preservation of our community's open spaces, ensuring that these beautiful landscapes are protected for generations to come. I'm eager to continue building on our incredible 52 year legacy and to explore new ways to advance our mission.*

*Thank you once again for your unwavering support and dedication. I look forward to working alongside each of you as we continue to protect the places we all love.*

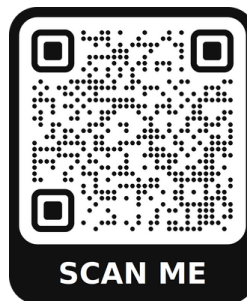
*With heartfelt thanks,  
Jason Meekhof*



President Emily Duthinh (left) with Executive Director Jason Meekhof (center) and Susan Julian (right)

## **WELCOME JASON**

We are thrilled to introduce Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy's new Executive Director, Jason Meekhof. A Michigan native and Wayne State University graduate, Meekhof replaces the previous ED, Sue Julian, who will remain a volunteer with the organization and serve on its Board of Directors. Meekhof has worked for multiple nonprofit organizations and joins Blue Heron from the National Deer Association, where he served as Midwest Regional Director. Shortly after starting at Blue Heron, he completed a Non-profit Management Certificate at Oakland University.



## **You're Invited**

Join us in honoring and celebrating decades of Sue Julian's dedication to conservation. Scan the QR code to RSVP online or call our office.

# Stewardship is Climate Action

According to Denise Keele, Executive Director of the Michigan Climate Action Network, *Conservation = Preservation + Stewardship*; with preservation defined as protecting natural areas or species from harmful human actions and stewardship defined as assisting natural areas or species with helpful human actions. We may understand the direct benefits of helpful human actions on a protected piece of land, but could stewardship efforts be tied to a greater global impact?

Keele says climate change is less a problem of individual belief than of collective action, a failure that can be remedied through effective civil engagement. The majority of Americans are concerned about climate and environmental issues, but only 8% of the population exhibits high levels of climate action. The good news is, she says, the stewardship hours and conservation work that is currently put into a diverse array of ecosystems across the nation add up to measurable climate action.

A 2022 report from the EPA on land use

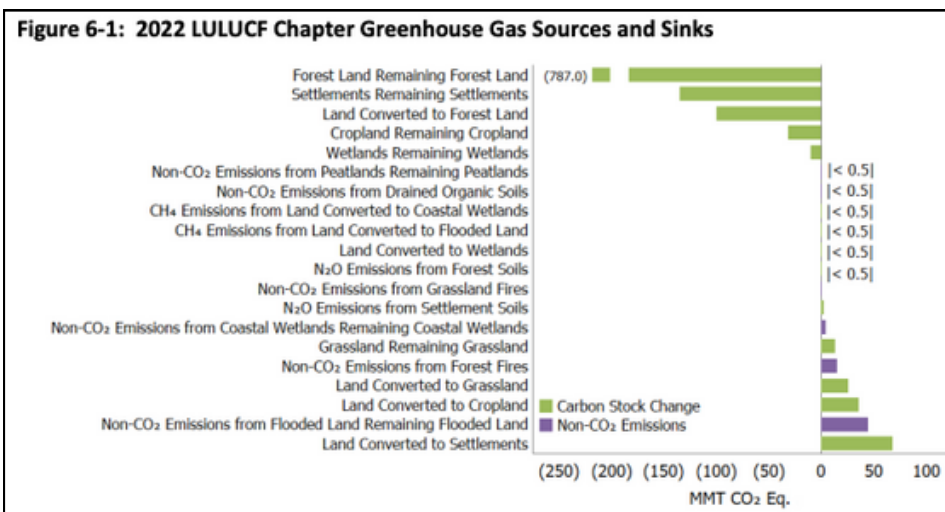


Volunteers and staff removing invasive purple loosestrife

change reveals that *forest land remaining forest land* acts as a carbon dioxide sink and removes more greenhouse gases from the atmosphere compared to other land use changes. Other land use changes that sequester CO<sub>2</sub> include *wetlands remaining wetlands, land converted to forest land, and land converted to grassland*. Effective stewardship of these carbon sinks is essential to both maximize the sequestration of CO<sub>2</sub> and avoid the release of CO<sub>2</sub> from the degradation of natural systems (World Resources Institute).

Blue Heron started preserving sites long before it was realized that there is a continual need to remove threats to each property; invasive species, neighbor trespass, inappropriate use. In addition to the help from volunteers, a formal stewardship program and fund is required to keep up with property needs.

Today, stewardship is a main pillar of Blue Heron. Staff and volunteers put in hours of hard work every week, not only maintaining but also improving our protected properties. Stewardship not only addresses the care and maintenance of individual ecosystems, it also contributes to the effectiveness of CO<sub>2</sub> sinks and therefore global reduction of greenhouse gasses.



# Thank You to our Wonderful Volunteers (April 1 - September 30)



Volunteer Rex installing signage and collecting property data

Bill Aldrich, Theresa Bainbridge, Mary Blanchard, Jan Bridgman, Jim Carlton, Dessalee Cook, Lisa Costanza, Denise DeCubber, Kathleen Dougherty, Mike Dougherty, Camila Duarte, Emily Duthinh, David Duthinh, Evan Duty, Kelly & Tom Duty, Patricia Reiset Flores & Israel Rios Jaramillo, Oralia Garcia, Kristin Gottschalk, Jean Gramlich, Tina Green, Tricia Hewines, Emily Holsinger, Kelly Holsinger, Alex Horak, Laurie Horiszny, Deana Hunter, Debbie Jackson,

Ben Julian, Chuck & Sue Julian, Larry Kodosky, Colin Kortman, Sherry Kortman, Douglas Lanyk, Tracy Marshall, Carole Mackey, Rex Mathewson, Kay & Ron McKay, Mike Metz, Bette Moen, Donna Papatheodoropoulos, Lora & Lorenzo Perkins, Greg & Michele Petrosky, Rene Plautz, Anne Prada, Barbara Reed, Theresa Ray, Michael Renehan, Gregory Robertson, Nancy Rodda, Todd Roeser, Kathy Rollins, Rick Rotramel, Claire Schleusener, Francesca Schmidt, Lynn Simmons, Beverly Steffens, Lynn Swanson, Madelyn Swan, Katelyn Vallier, Beth Woodward, Susan Yun.



Volunteers Laurie and Denise educating families on native plants



# THANKS TO ALL OUR DONORS



Great Blue Heron by Theresa Ray

**VISIONARY**  
\$1,000 and above

**CHAMPION**  
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**FRIEND**  
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## FRIENDS OF NATURE

Thank you to our community partners who went above and beyond to help us promote the fall plant sale and our mission.



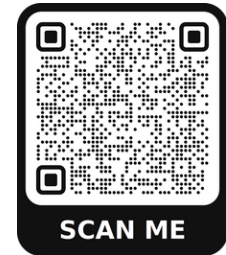
# COMMUNITY IMPACT WEEKEND



Join us for outdoor boardwalk maintenance on Kimball Preserve. Lunch provided.

**Saturday, November 2**  
**12pm-3pm**

Scan the code or register online at [blueheronheadwaters.org/events](https://blueheronheadwaters.org/events)



## Join the Blue Heron Stewardship Committee

Are you passionate about preserving the natural beauty of our local landscapes? The Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy is looking for dedicated volunteers to join our Stewardship Committee.

This is a unique opportunity to take an active role in caring for and protecting *your* land, water, and wildlife. As part of the committee, you'll help maintain trails, restore native habitats, plant native plants and promote biodiversity. But it's more than just hands-on work—you'll also have a voice in shaping the future of land preservation all while learning from experts in native ecosystems. Your insights and efforts will help guide decisions that impact the long-term conservation of our natural resources.

Whether you can commit a few hours or take on a larger role, your contributions are essential to ensuring the beauty and health of these lands for future generations. Together, we can make a lasting difference.



Steward Kyle planting natives on a property



Ready to get involved? Contact us today to learn more about joining our team of passionate volunteers and help lead the way in land conservation.





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**#NATUREWORTHPRESERVING**



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Let us know here.**



<https://nohlc.regfox.com/opt-out-of-paper-based-communications>



With your support, Girl Scout Troop 77814 helped us build turtle nest protectors and install them at the Sashabaw Creek Preserve.