

# NATURE *Near You*

NEWS FROM SIX RIVERS LAND CONSERVANCY



**Six Rivers**  
Land Conservancy

## 2022 | SPRING NEWSLETTER

*Nature Near You is published for the supporters and partners of Six Rivers Land Conservancy*

### THE CONFLUENCE

*By Christopher Bunch, Executive Director*



**MARCH 29, 2022**

Mid-afternoon of another gray, non-descript late winter Michigan day, I broke away to clear my head for a few minutes before shifting to another project. Standing beside the Paint Creek, looking to see if I could find a large

Steelhead I had begun to call a friend, I realized I was surrounded. The trees around me and across the creek were full of Cedar Waxwings—at least 30 of them. A veritable herd. I spent a few minutes with them, listening and watching, and then left them to their business and returned to mine.

It was the perfect interlude. I don't remember which of the many ongoing all-consuming projects I was shifting between, but I do remember the moments I spent hanging out with birds and the creek. Those moments did exactly what they were supposed to do—provided some respite, some perspective, and reminded me why I do this work. Not for the spreadsheets, the insurance contracts, or the deadlines—rather, to ensure those birds can carry on with their business. That we, and future generations, and the fellow inhabitants of our planet, are able to enjoy and prosper in our natural world.

There are 8 million acres of public land in Michigan. Only 200,000 of those are here, in this region, where the majority of the population lives and works. There is a multi-generational attitude here that "nature is up north"—this is where we build cars, make our livings—we have to go "up north" to get into nature.

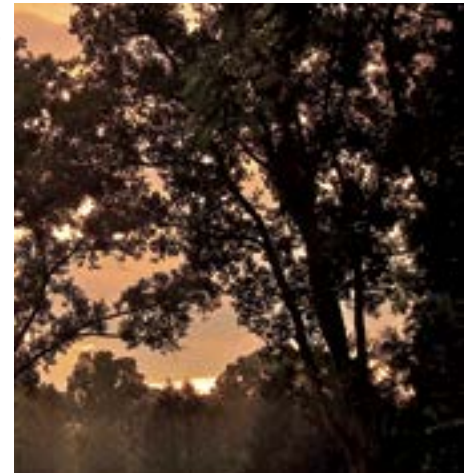
I am grateful to be a part of a growing constituency that is working to adjust that attitude, to shift the paradigm to recognizing, appreciating, and protecting all of the wonderful assets we have right here, at home. Like my friend, the steelhead in the Paint Creek, and his neighbors the Cedar Waxwings.

Thank you for the privilege of your support and the opportunity to do this work. Join me as we continue the work of protecting the *Nature Near You* to leave a legacy of clean water, fresh air, open spaces, healthy forests, vibrant habitats, thriving wildlife, and prosperous communities.

### *Land Protection*

#### VILLAGE OF BEVERLY HILLS

Six Rivers is excited to announce that Beverly Hills residents and visitors may soon be able to enjoy a new, much needed village park in the southwest area of their community. Located off 13 Mile Rd., near Lahser Rd., the acquisition of this 8-acre property along the Rouge River is a rare opportunity in a highly-developed area of Oakland County. In January, the Village of Beverly Hills hired Six Rivers to write a Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund grant application to help them purchase this beautiful piece of property. The Trust Fund grant would assist in the cost of the land acquisition. If successful, the DNR grant will help pay for approximately 75% of the purchase price and Beverly Hills will be notified in early December if they will be recommended for this grant. Six Rivers is grateful to be working with the Village of Beverly Hills and some outstanding, civic-minded and nature-loving village residents like Lucille and Mike Naware, who have long championed the idea of this former residence becoming a community park one day.



*Towering trees at the proposed site near the Rouge River in Beverly Hills*

#### ACQUISITION ASSIST PROGRAM

The Six Rivers Land Conservancy Acquisition Assist Program is available to any township, city, or county agency in our five-county service area that is interested in acquiring land for greenspace and/or parks. These agencies can work together with Six Rivers to make sure the land they are interested in acquiring is secured for conservation/recreation purposes before it's acquired for development. When appropriate, Six Rivers can step in and acquire the property from the landowner to get it out of harm's way, and hold onto it so that the agency has time to come up with the funding to then purchase it from Six Rivers. Once the process is complete, the agency ends up with the property and can control its future.

For details and more information, please contact Brian Marzolf, Land Protection Manager at [bmarzolf@sixriversrlc.org](mailto:bmarzolf@sixriversrlc.org) or (248) 601-2816, x460.

*Continued on page 3*



# Six Rivers

www.sixriversrlc.org | info@sixriversrlc.org | 248.601.2816

Land Conservancy 4480 Orion Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, PO Box 80902, Rochester, Michigan 48308-0902

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*Photo by Donald Drife*



## STAY UP-TO-DATE ON SIX RIVERS' ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS



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## WELCOME KIRSTEN LYONS!



We're excited to welcome Kirsten Lyons as our new LSC Cisma Director! Kirsten has served many capacities in the environmental field, including as a college instructor, landscape designer, and sustainability consultant. Her work takes a systemic and ecological approach to site design and management.

Kirsten assisted in developing Detroit's 1st Green Alley and also led the design and implementation of the RoofTop Farm project at the Green Garage in Midtown Detroit, where she worked to help small businesses become more sustainable. Kirsten holds a Master of Natural Resource Stewardship degree with specialization in Ecological

Restoration from Colorado State University, a Master of Architecture degree from Lawrence Technological University, a B.F.A. from Wayne State University with a concentration in design, and a horticulture degree from St. Clair County Community College (SC4), where she also taught courses on the subject. A lifelong learner and community volunteer, Kirsten is also a Michigan Conservation Steward and an MSU Extension Advanced Master Gardener Volunteer.

Before joining Six Rivers, Kirsten led the development of the land care program for Friends of the St. Clair River. She grew the watershed nonprofit organization's volunteer force, led community science and engagement programs, and oversaw a diversity of restoration and stewardship projects.





Marine City, St. Clair County -  
creation of future public marina  
within walking distance of  
downtown



Stoney Creek in Oakland County:  
Land protected by a conservation  
easement held by Six Rivers  
Land Conservancy.

# Land Protection

*Continued from page 1*

## WHAT CAN A CONSERVATION EASEMENT DO FOR YOU?

When a property is considered for preservation, it typically has natural, agricultural, scenic, or historic values and attributes that make it worthy of preserving for the future. A conservation easement can be just the tool to use to keep that land preserved. It's a legal document/agreement that is developed together with a land owner and Six Rivers Land Conservancy. It's designed to restrict and/or allow certain uses of the land and is custom-tailored to meet the needs of the landowner(s). Conservation easements are retained in perpetuity and are attached to the property forever—offering peace of mind that the land is preserved for generations to come.

- Each is uniquely designed to meet the goals of the land owner and the conservancy
- Managed to protect unique habitat, species, or natural/historic character
- Create or add to important habitat corridors
- Protect native natural communities
- Protect and preserve threatened and endangered species

## LAND CONSERVATION: OPTIONS FOR PROPERTY OWNERS

- Donate a conservation easement to Six Rivers on all or part of your property—you retain ownership and we'll help protect it. The easement can restrict certain things like any future development on the land, and/or allow things like recreational trails or fishing access—though public access is not a requirement. A gift of a conservation easement may provide you and your estate with significant tax deductions. A stewardship gift is often requested to assist with enforcing the restrictions of the conservation easement on the land over time.
- Donate your land to Six Rivers Land Conservancy and we'll protect it permanently—you can do this now or through your estate using a Will or Living Trust.
- Donate your land with a retained life estate—you can live on it for the rest of your life.

Six Rivers currently holds 28 conservation easements covering 1,937 acres of land in our five-county service area. To gain a better perspective of how much land this is, it represents an area of approximately 3 square miles! If you or someone you know is interested in protecting/preserving their property, contact Six Rivers Land Conservancy to get started today.

## THE ANSWER TO THE *Why?*

*By Hollie Coleman, Stewardship Technician*

When you look out your window, what do you see? For me, I see a long line of houses, sidewalks, cars, a Japanese barberry planted in my neighbor's front yard (I'll have to tell them it's an invasive species later...), and the occasional person walking their dog trying to get their daily dose of nature, which is so hard to come by in these concrete jungles. If you're lucky you might see more wildlife: a landscape not yet taken over by society.

When I look back on times I've felt happiest, it's almost always a fond memory in nature, alone or with others, and I think many of you will agree. Whether it's a local park or a grandiose vacation to Pictured Rocks: there's a rush of dopamine you get when you breathe in the fresh air. It's a feeling that takes you back in time to our primordial roots when it was just nature and us.

The picture below was taken in Springfield Township, after co-workers and I worked to remove invasive species like buckthorn, autumn olive, and purple loosestrife. The result is a landscape that isn't taken over by invasive species, but flourishes with native goldenrod, asters, and other beautiful species.

When asked why I do what I do, or why anyone working in this field does, it typically isn't for the money, but a passion. I do what I do because nature is a refuge for us, as well as the wildlife that occupies it. I do what I do because when you love something you take care of it and all of us play a part in keeping it beautiful.



## *Legacy Society*

### MAKE AN IMPACT BY PROTECTING LAND FOREVER

Making a Legacy/Planned Gift is a great way to show your support for nature and special places in southeastern Michigan. Your gift to Six Rivers Land Conservancy will help secure our future while meeting your own personal, financial, and philanthropic goals. Here are several options:

- **Bequest by Will or Living Trust:**

Donate a specific amount, make a gift from the residuary of your estate, or name Six Rivers Land Conservancy as a beneficiary.

- **Stock and Securities:**

A gift of appreciated stock, securities, or closely held securities will provide for Six Rivers Land Conservancy as well as provide you with a significant income tax deduction for the full market value of the stock. Discuss the possibilities with your financial advisor.

- **Real Estate:**

Gifts of real estate may include developed property, undeveloped land, or a remainder interest in a personal residence, farm, or vacation home.

- **Life Insurance:**

Give a gift by naming Six Rivers Land Conservancy as a beneficiary of your life insurance policies. Six Rivers Land Conservancy can also be named as the owner of whole life insurance policies, which has significant tax benefits.

- **Retirement Assets:**

Enjoy tax benefits by naming Six Rivers Land Conservancy as beneficiary of your retirement plans, such as pension plans, annuity contracts, 401(k) plans, and Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs). You can also donate a portion of your required annual distribution

*If you are planning to include Six Rivers as part of your legacy, let us know now so that we can thank you and acknowledge you as a Legacy Society member. For more information, contact [kmyers@sixriversrlc.org](mailto:kmyers@sixriversrlc.org).*



## UP, UP, AND *Away!*

By Ian Ableson, Stewardship Manager

For anyone who has watched a rabbit run for dear life to escape a coyote's clutches, the advantages of flight in the animal kingdom are obvious. Wings allow animals a whole range of new options that include fleeing and hiding from predators, elevated hunting spots, and safer habitats in which to raise young.

But the evolution of flight is a complicated process. For all of our advanced human learning, we only mastered flight a little over one hundred years ago. As far as vertebrates go, true flight has only evolved three separate times. Oddly enough, the wing structure has turned out different every time.

Every dinosaur-loving elementary school kid is familiar with the first of the flying vertebrates. Pterosaurs were not actually dinosaurs, but rather flying reptiles that lived during the same period. They were a varied and diverse group, with species that were similar to the birds we are familiar with today—from cliff-dwelling fish-eaters to tiny insect-eaters to hawk-like predators of small scurrying critters. Their wings were essentially thick membranes hanging from their massively elongated ring fingers. These fingers were typically longer than their torso. The wing membrane connected to the pterosaur's ankles, and was thick enough to contain layers of muscle and blood vessels. There's a lot we still don't understand about pterosaur flight—how exactly species that had 30+ foot wingspans took off, for example—but nevertheless, they dominated the skies for millions of years.

Birds were next. As birds evolved from dinosaurs, we can still see the ghost of a reptilian arm and hand in the skeletal structure of bird wings. In a bird's case, the bones just serve as anchors for the feathers, the true stars of bird flight. Feather structure varies greatly depending on the needs of the species—owls, for example, have serrations on their feathers that allow them to fly nearly silently. The capabilities of flying birds are as widely varied as birds themselves, from little darting hummingbirds to majestic swooping falcons and far-flying albatrosses.

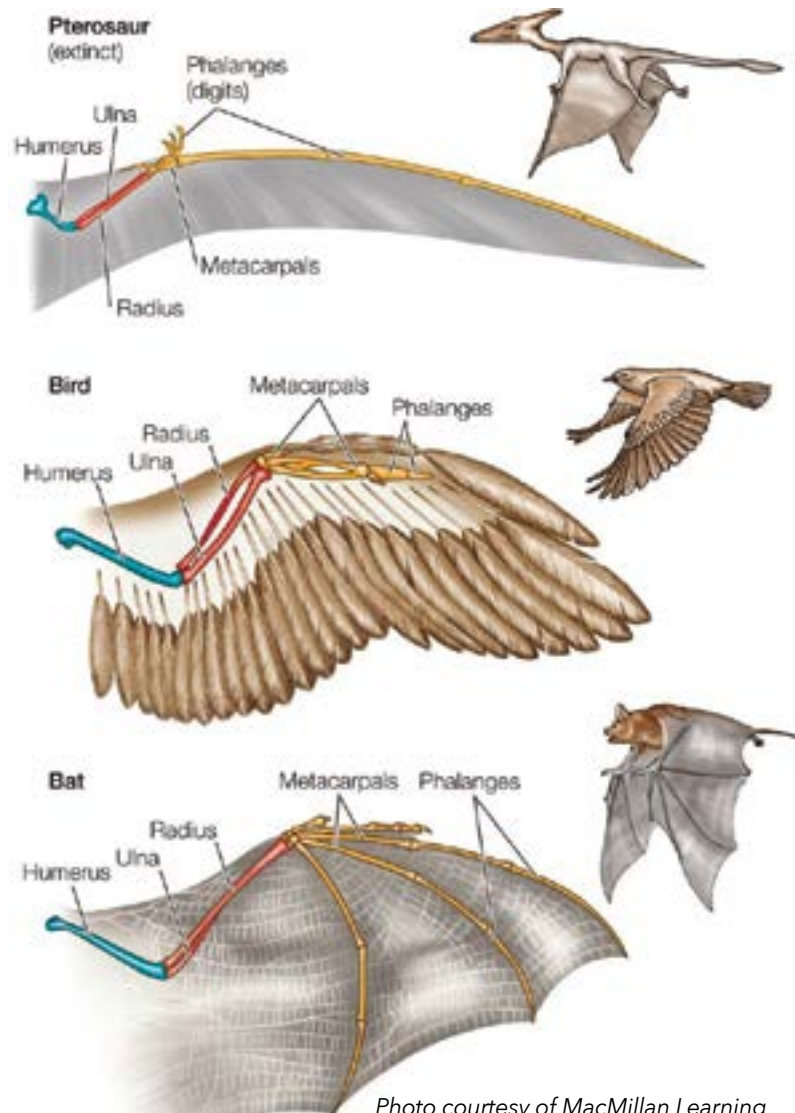


Photo courtesy of MacMillan Learning

Finally, there are the bats. Evolving from a mammal similar to a gliding tree shrew around fifty million years ago, bats have maintained their status as the world's only truly flying mammal ever since. As they are mammals, many of the bones in their arm and wing are easily identifiable as the same bones that make up our own arms and hands (check out the diagram!). The entire wing is just one thin membrane stretched between their elongated fingers. Due to the flexibility of their wings, bats tend to be slower but much more maneuverable than birds. Like the birds, different bats have different flight capabilities depending on their need—bats that consume insects are generally much faster than the fruit eaters, whose meal does not tend to fly away.



*Support Our Mission*

Contact Kristen Myers, Deputy Director

Phone: 248-601-2816

Email: [kmyers@sixriversrlc.org](mailto:kmyers@sixriversrlc.org)

[www.sixriversrlc.org](http://www.sixriversrlc.org)

## OUTDOOR SUMMIT

Six Rivers was excited to be part of the inaugural Michigan Outdoor Summit held in Traverse City in March. Presented by Land of Outsiders, Heart of the Lakes, MParks, and Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, it was the first ever event held to connect Michigan's conservation community with the outdoor recreation industry. The summit featured workshops and sessions covering outdoor recreation business topics, technical aspects of land conservation, and topics on shared values like diversity, equity, and inclusion, and addressing changing climate conditions. There were tours and activities hosted by local land conservancies and businesses like preserve hikes, climbing instruction and wilderness cooking.

The summit kicked off the night before the sessions with dinner and a presentation by Stacy Bare, an expert on the connections between mental health and outdoor recreation. A veteran and an avid outdoor adventurer who was named National Geographic Outdoor Adventurer of the Year in 2014, he shared his experience and successes in helping veterans and others address mental health challenges through engagement in the outdoors and previewed clips of his upcoming adventure movie premiering later this year.

Six Rivers staff attended the event, participating in a variety of sessions and activities and providing some logistical support during the summit. Chris Bunch, Executive Director of Six Rivers and board chair of Heart of the Lakes said, "I was really grateful and excited that the event sold out in its first year. It was a great opportunity for folks with common interests who are usually approaching them from different angles to engage and interact, and to find ways to increase their collaboration and impact. I'm looking forward to expanding the event in the future and to increasing our effectiveness through the new relationships we are building".



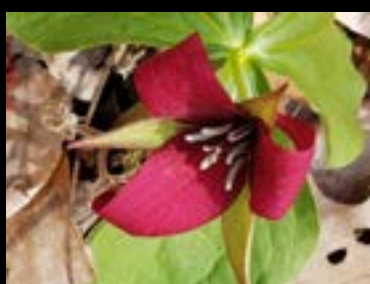
FREE

## SPRING WILDFLOWER HIKE

Saturday, May 7, 10:30 - 11:30am  
**Sutherland Nature Sanctuary**  
 3960 Diehl Road  
 Hadley Township, MI 48455

Join us for a free Wildflower Hike at Sutherland Nature Sanctuary in Hadley Township, lead by our in-house naturalist, Ian Ableson.

To register, send an email to [info@sixriversrlc.org](mailto:info@sixriversrlc.org) and let us know how many people will be attending with you.





## SPRING 2022 STEWDAYS!

Join us at one of our StewDays and help protect the *Nature Near You!*

We need your help to control the spread of garlic mustard and dame's rocket, persistent invasive plants that can completely change the ecology of habitats that they invade.

Dress for the weather and don't forget your favorite pair of gloves and sturdy, waterproof footwear. We'll supply tools, refreshments and extra gloves.

Contact Ian Ableson, Stewardship Manager, at 248.601.2816, x464 or [iableson@sixriversrlc.org](mailto:iableson@sixriversrlc.org)

WHEN	WHERE
Tuesday, May 3 9:00am - 1:00pm	<b>Bear Creek Nature Park</b> 740 W Snell Road, Rochester, MI 48306 (In partnership with Oakland Township Parks and Recreation)
Saturday, May 14 9:00am - 1:00pm	<b>Paint Creek Trail</b> 4480 Orion Road, Rochester, MI 48306
Friday, May 20 9:00am - 12:00pm	<b>Drayton Plains Nature Center</b> 2125 Denby Drive, Waterford, MI 48329
Friday, May 27 9:00am - 1:00pm	<b>Sutherland Nature Sanctuary</b> 3960 Diehl Rd, Metamora, MI 48455
Saturday, June 4 9:00am - 1:00pm	<b>Murray Conservation Easement</b> (West Bloomfield) For directions, email: <a href="mailto:iableson@sixriversrlc.org">iableson@sixriversrlc.org</a>



Sponsored By



FREE

## BAT HIKES!

Join Six Rivers for three free evening bat hikes this summer! We will use Echo Meters with our phones and iPads to monitor for bats.

WHEN	WHERE
Friday, July 22 8:30pm	<b>Sutherland Nature Sanctuary</b> in Hadley Township
Saturday, August 13 8:00pm	<b>Nicholson Nature Center</b> in Clinton Township
Friday, September 16 7:30pm	<b>Golden Preserve</b> in Springfield Township

Parking is limited, so please call our office at 248-601-2816, x463 or email [info@sixriversrlc.org](mailto:info@sixriversrlc.org) to register.

We try to minimize the use of flashlights to maintain our night vision, but you are welcome to bring your own flashlight.





# NATURE NEAR YOU

## PHOTO CONTEST



*Oh Wise One! by Michael Shaeffer*



*Indigo Bunting's Quick Lunch  
by Christine Andrews*



*Spinx Moth by Winnie Chrzanowski*



*Un-be-leaf-able Newt by Steve Elzerman*

Submit up to five photos celebrating our natural environment in Southeastern Michigan in a JPEG (.jpg) file format to [SixRiversPhotos@gmail.com](mailto:SixRiversPhotos@gmail.com). Photo submissions will be accepted until August 26, 2022.

All photos that meet our guidelines will be eligible and available for public viewing. We have two categories for submission: Juried (photo files of 5MB or greater) and Enthusiast (photo files less than 5MB). In the Juried category, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place award winners will be determined by a distinguished panel of judges. People's Choice Awards in both the Juried and Enthusiast categories will be determined by an online vote after the due date.

Follow us on Facebook or sign up for our mailing list at [www.sixriversrlc.org](http://www.sixriversrlc.org) for updates and voting info!

### JURIED CATEGORY PRIZES:

First Place .....	\$200
Second Place .....	\$150
Third Place .....	\$100
People's Choice .....	\$150

### ENTHUSIAST CATEGORY:

PEOPLE'S CHOICE.....	\$100
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*Entries must be accompanied with a completed submission form. See our website at [www.sixriversrlc.org](http://www.sixriversrlc.org) for complete rules and submission forms.*





## THE VIEW FROM ABOVE *By Chris Bunch, Executive Director*

Climbing up from the path to get perspective is hard, especially when you're head down in the trenches trying to keep up. Even more so when circumstances have created a swirl of new challenges just to maintaining balance and progress.

2021 was better than 2020, though many of the previous years' challenges carried on throughout much of 2021. Early in the year, we remained hopeful about being able to return to in-person events and other regular activities, but by late spring we gave up on most of that. It wasn't until late in the summer that we began to see the potential to return to some sort of in-person interaction, which then meant we accelerated planning and execution for events in extraordinarily short time frames—all while still unsure they would be able to take place.

Those challenges notwithstanding, we had some wonderful successes and wonderful times with the events we were able to hold. Star hikes, our conservation celebration, and then finally being able to hold our annual (interrupted) Conservation Leadership Luncheon at the Detroit Athletic Club were all great successes and greatly appreciated—by all of our staff, volunteers and board members, and all of those who attended.

While interruptions to in-person activities were happening, we were able to continue with some of our regular stewardship volunteer work, since those were outdoor activities. And Ian and other staff members did a great job increasing our virtual engagement efforts. Ian did some great online talks about various natural features, and we increased the scope and frequency of our online communication. One thing we did not do, however, was shift to online events. While many other organizations did a great job with those shifts, we chose to stay hopeful that we would be able to get back together soon, and so held off.

Our land protection work continued apace, carrying on with ongoing projects and picking up some new ones. We were able to complete and close out several projects by year-end, and got others started for the upcoming season.

Our stewardship work also continued largely uninterrupted in 2021. In fact, it picked up significantly with contract work we secured when trying to fill voids that arose in the early stages of the lock-downs in 2020. This has become a welcome addition to both our ability to accomplish mission driven outcomes and to generate revenue from work that supports our mission.

On the administrative side, we welcomed a new administrative manager who has done a marvelous job streamlining and handling the multitude of obligations we face as a non-profit. Many of our staff were able to take advantage of remote opportunities to advance their skills. The board took the opportunity to revisit and update our strategic plan, largely driven by changes to our efforts that were brought about by adjustments made because of the pandemic.

This last is perhaps the single most important development for Six Rivers, perhaps since its founding. Our board boldly adopted a goal of seeking to double the amount of conservation and recreation land in our region. There are 8 million acres of public land in Michigan, but only 200,000 of that is down here in southeastern Michigan, where the majority of the State's population lives and works, and where the majority of the environmental impacts have taken place. Six Rivers committed to trying to protect 75,000 acres ourselves over the next several years, and working with partners at all levels to ensure that collectively we add an additional 200,000 acres of conservation and recreation land in the region.

As 2021 came to a close, we were all extraordinarily grateful to see conditions in our lives improve from the low stages of the pandemic. While the road ahead will undoubtedly have more bumps in it, we are most grateful for our supporters, our volunteers, and all of you who share in our vision and values for preserving the *Nature Near You*.





# 2021: FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

## ASSETS

	2021	2020
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$72,677	\$158,249
Grants and Contributions		
Receivable	\$159,375	\$206,916
Other Current Assets	\$6,853	\$16,694
Land Preserves	\$5,884,162	\$9,219,030
Conservation Easements	28	26
Property and Equipment - Net	\$11,646	177
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$6,134,741</b>	<b>\$9,601,092</b>

## LIABILITIES

	2021	2020
Accounts Payable and		
Accrued Expenses	\$14,868	\$70,245
Payroll Liabilities Payable	—	—
Loans Payable	\$4,233,771	\$7,739,889
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$4,248,639</b>	<b>\$7,810,134</b>

## NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	\$1,886,100	\$1,790,958
Temporarily Restricted	—	—
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,886,100</b>	<b>\$1,790,958</b>

## TOTAL LIABILITIES AND

<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$6,134,739</b>	<b>\$9,601,092</b>
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## FINANCIAL POSITION

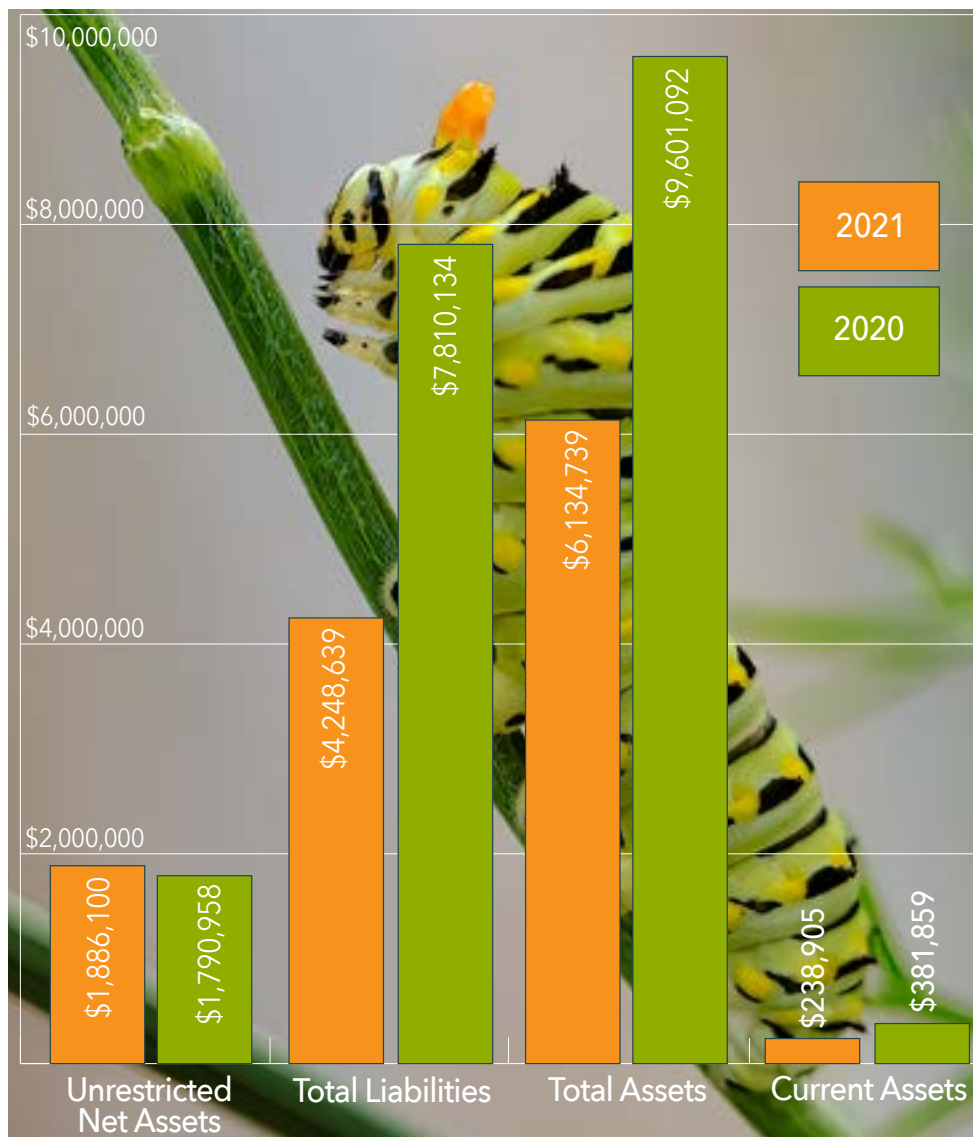
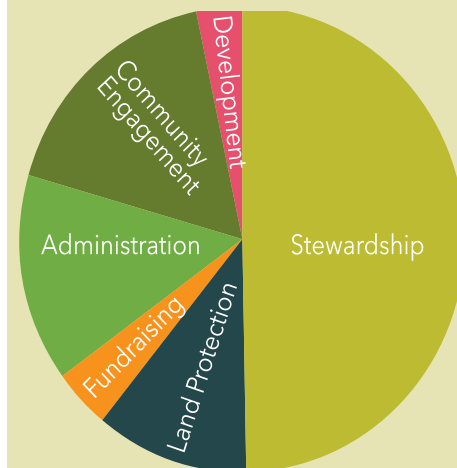


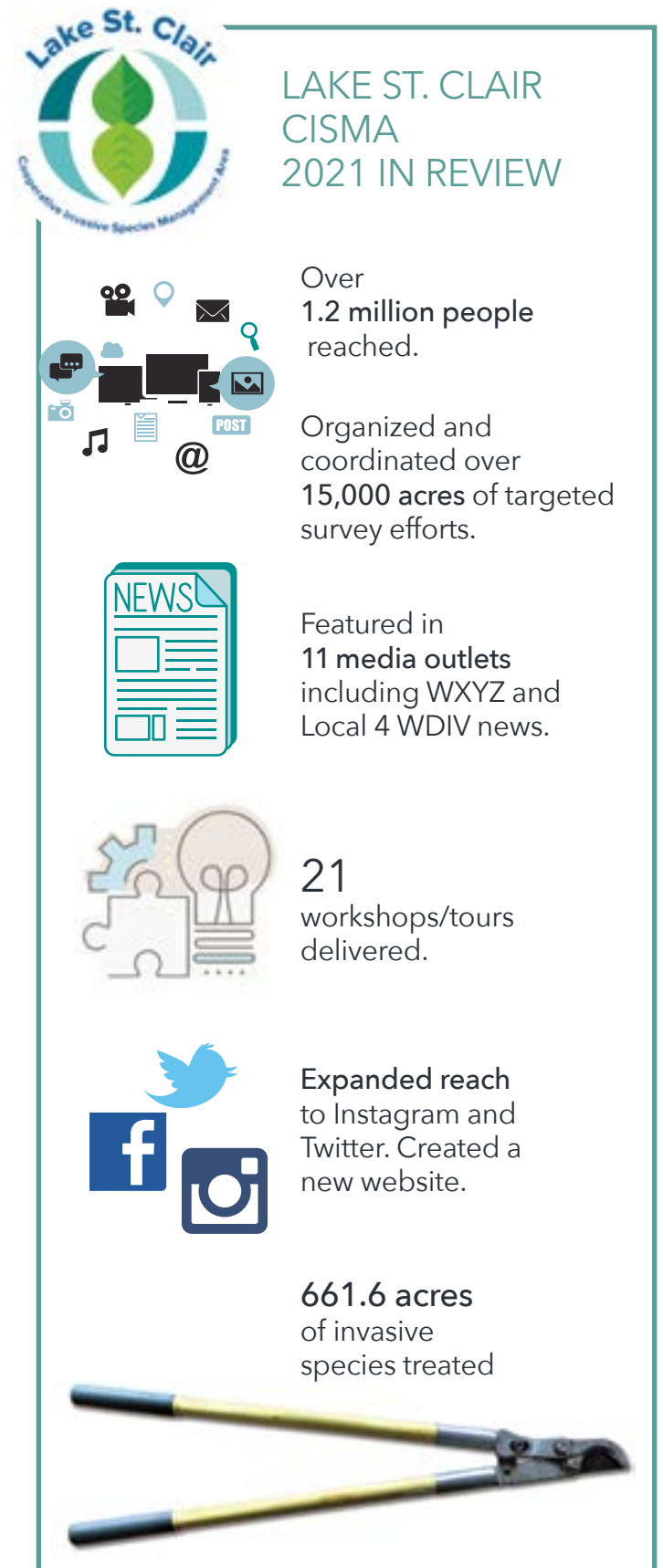
Photo by Winnie Chrzanowski

## 2021 EXPENSES BY CLASS



- Stewardship . . . . 49.76%
- Land Protection . . . 11.1%
- Development . . . . 4.3%
- Administration . . . 14.5%
- Community Engagement . . . 17.0%
- Fundraising . . . . . 3.3%







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In Honor of Past, Present,  
and Future Family  
By Steve Z. Klein

## FOR MORE ON HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR MISSION, CONTACT:

Kristen Myers, Deputy Director  
Phone: 248-601-2816  
Email: [kmyers@sixriversrlc.org](mailto:kmyers@sixriversrlc.org)  
[www.sixriversrlc.org](http://www.sixriversrlc.org)

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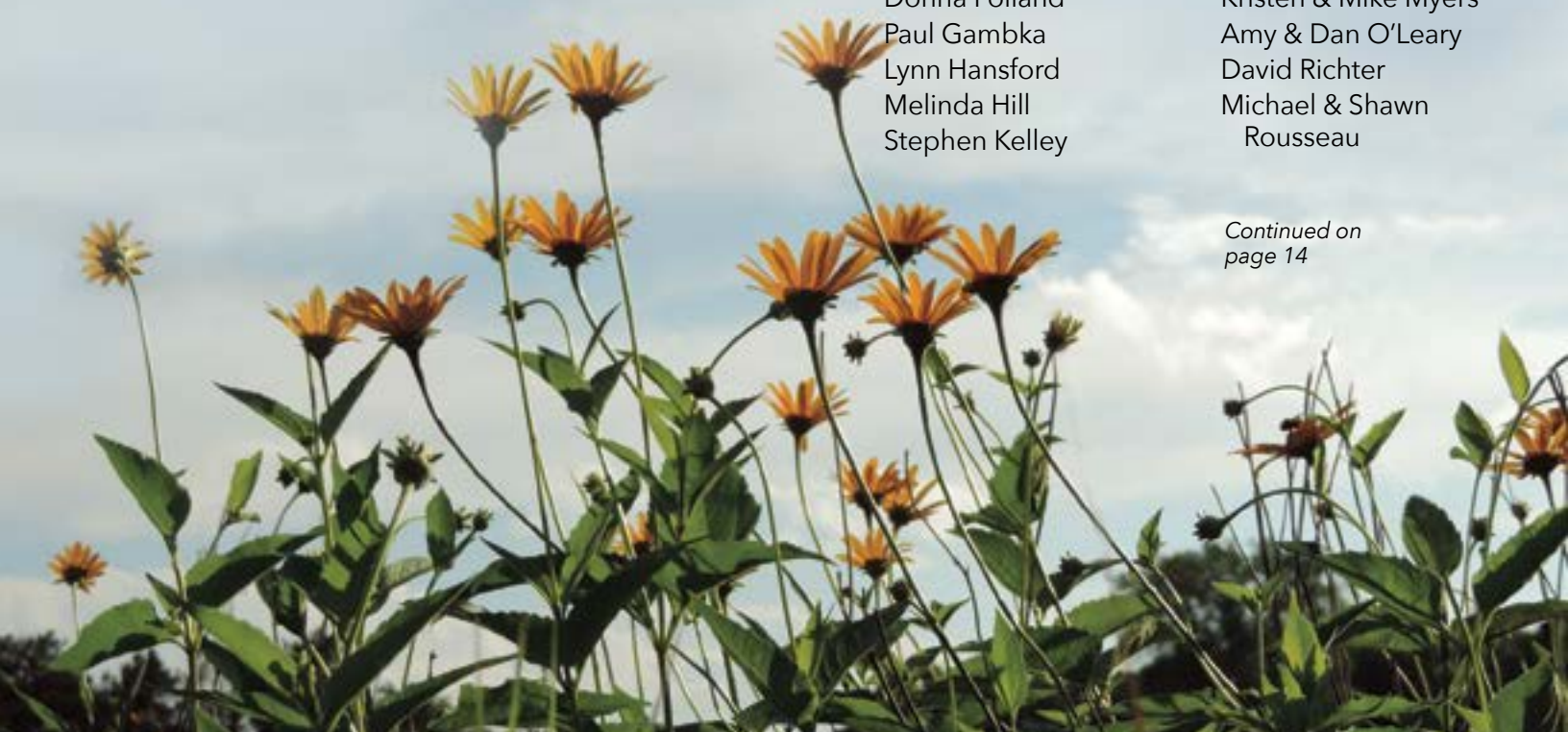
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### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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