



Western Reserve
Land Conservancy

land • people • community

FALL / WINTER
2024-2025



Landline

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CELEBRATING A NEW MILESTONE!



We are thrilled to announce an incredible milestone: 75,000 total acres of land have been permanently protected!

From natural landscapes and working farms to urban greenspaces and everything in between, these 75,000 acres represent a shared commitment to preserving Ohio's beauty, heritage, and environmental health for generations to come.

This achievement would not have been possible without the dedication and collaboration of landowners, volunteers, donors, board members, partners, and staff who believe in our mission. Together, we have ensured that these cherished spaces are conserved forever.

Thank you for being an essential part of this journey!

Funding for this edition of *Landline* was generously provided by the Sandra L. and Dennis B. Haslinger Family Foundation

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Email us at
info@wrlandconservancy.org

3850 Chagrin River Rd.
Moreland Hills, OH 44022
440.528.4150

WRLANDCONSERVANCY.ORG

Letter from our President and CEO

—
Rich
Cochran



Dear Friends,

On behalf of Western Reserve Land Conservancy, I am thrilled to welcome you to this latest edition of *Landline*.

We are proud to have you as part of our community, and this publication is our way of connecting with you, our valued supporters and partners, to highlight the extraordinary work happening across the region.

Inside these pages, you will discover the inspiring stories of our dedicated team members and the many stakeholders who help us achieve our mission to provide the people of our region with essential natural assets through land conservation and restoration. From the vital programs that preserve cherished green spaces to innovative urban projects that breathe new life into our cities, *Landline* showcases the efforts that make a lasting impact on the environment and the people we serve.

We believe that collaboration is key to creating thriving, sustainable communities. Whether through our conservation efforts, urban revitalization, educational programs, or

partnerships with organizations across Northeast Ohio, every success we celebrate is a result of the strong support from people like you.

We hope this issue of *Landline* inspires you to continue engaging with us. Together, we can ensure that future generations have access to the vibrant, healthy landscapes that make this region so unique.

Thank you for being a vital part of our journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rich Cochran'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Rich Cochran
President & CEO,
Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Bates Creek Preserve: A New Geauga Park Protected

Bates Creek Preserve—a Hambden Township property rich with impressive forests, high quality wetlands and a section of the Bates Creek—has been protected in perpetuity. Thanks to a partnership between Western Reserve Land Conservancy and the Geauga Park District, the beauty and natural resources of the property's 183 acres will be preserved forever.

The once privately-owned land has served a few purposes over the years. The property once contained a tree nursery, and a section of the forest was utilized for maple syrup production. With its plethora of ponds and streams, it has also served as the training grounds for the Buckeye Retriever Club, where they have hosted AKC licensed hunting tests and field trials for the past 40 years.

Outside of tree-growing and dog training, the property has remained largely untouched. Located along Rock Creek Road and Kile Road, the preserve consists of 87 acres of mature upland hardwood forest, 43 acres of category III wetlands, 21 acres of meadows, and nine acres of ponds. The property contains 12,000 linear feet of tributaries and waters, including 7,350 linear feet of Bates Creek that flows to the Grand River, eventually reaching Lake Erie.

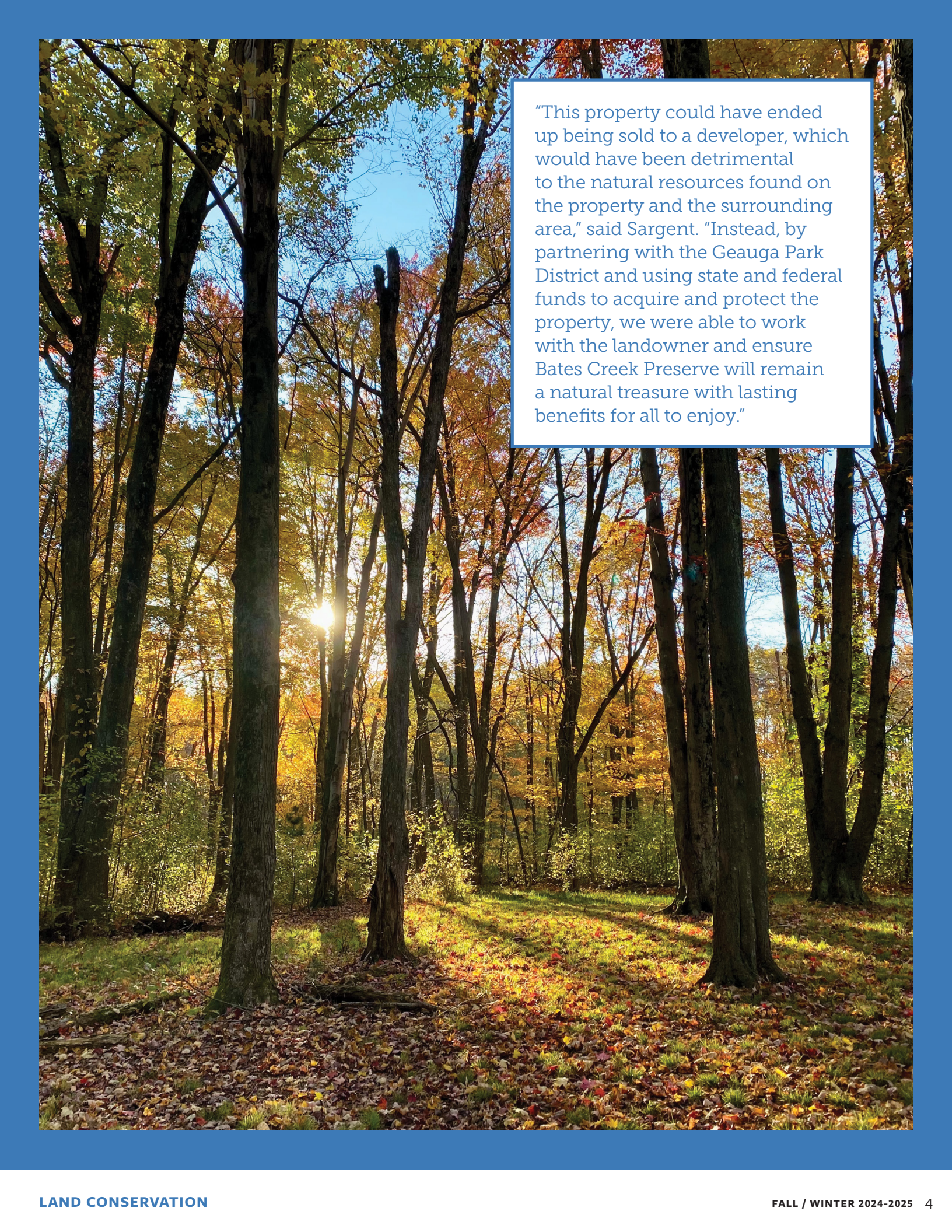
Between its acreage and multitude of natural features, the preserve is a high-quality habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, including 16 rare, threatened and endangered species.

These consist of six conservation priority bird species, including the blue-headed vireo and the Blackburnian warbler; six state-listed bat species, including the little brown bat, eastern red bat, and silver-haired bat; and four other rare or listed species, including the northern clearwater crayfish, mosaic damner, and two species of lichen that are new to Ohio.

The Land Conservancy worked to secure funding on behalf of the park district through the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The purchase was made possible by the generous contributions and cooperation of the Kittredge family, who shared the Land Conservancy's vision for protecting the property and its natural resources for generations to come.

The property has been transferred to Geauga Park District, who have shared plans to develop the land as a public park for the community to enjoy passive recreation. The park will be renamed to Hambden Hills, referencing a former owner's name for the property. The park district has also made an agreement with Buckeye Retriever Club to allow them to continue to host their events and programming at the park. According to Amy Sargent, Conservation Project Manager for the Land Conservancy, this project was a great example of Ohio land being protected by public and private partnerships coming together, benefiting the health and well-being of the community.

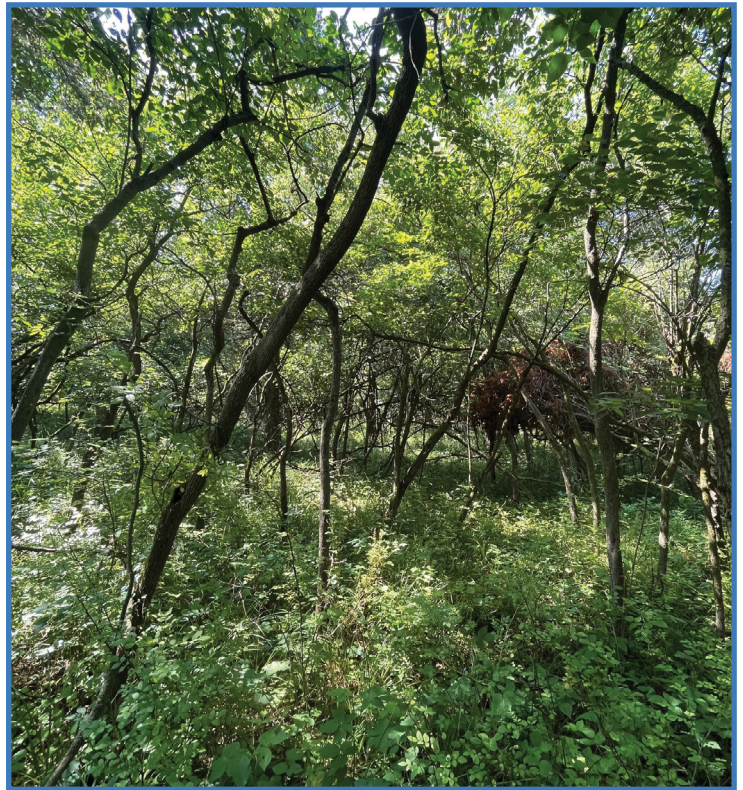




"This property could have ended up being sold to a developer, which would have been detrimental to the natural resources found on the property and the surrounding area," said Sargent. "Instead, by partnering with the Geauga Park District and using state and federal funds to acquire and protect the property, we were able to work with the landowner and ensure Bates Creek Preserve will remain a natural treasure with lasting benefits for all to enjoy."

PROTECTING UNIQUE Kelleys Island Habitats

Kelleys Island is a favorite getaway for many, but it's more than a vacation destination. Though the island is the largest American island in Lake Erie, it's relatively small—approximately 3,000 acres in size—and it consists of a stunning combination of lakeside views and natural spaces.



The island's protected acreage makes it truly remarkable. Nearly 1,000 acres are protected through the combined efforts of Western Reserve Land Conservancy, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and the Village of Kelleys Island. The newest addition to the island's protected land has been a 13-acre extension to Quinn Preserve, which was protected in perpetuity by a partnership between the Land Conservancy and the Village of Kelleys Island.

Finalized in September 2024, the Quinn Preserve Extension is home to a number of rare, threatened and endangered species. Its red cedar forest habitat, for example, is an extremely rare habitat in Ohio; Kelley's Island is the only existing location in the state where this forest type is found. While the island was once dominated by its lush red cedar forests, it was clear-cut for timber in the 19th century—making the forests that still exist especially important to the island's unique ecosystem.

Bats thrive across the property, which provides an excellent habitat for feeding and daytime roosting areas. Four state-listed species were documented on the site, including three designated species of concern—the big brown bat, Eastern red bat, and hoary bat—and the state-endangered tri-colored bat, a species also pending being listed at the federal level.

A wide variety of bird species also reside in the extension. Not only is there an active bald eagle nest on the property, but the island is a critical stopover habitat for migrating songbirds that seek healthy forests and meadows. Several state species of

concern like the sharp-skinned hawk and the bobolink make use of the island as they pass through, as well as several state species of special interest like the Northern saw-whet owl and the dark-eyed junco.

The original portion of Quinn Preserve was protected in perpetuity by the Land Conservancy in 2012, meaning that its pristine natural spaces will be forever safe. With the new extension, the preserve will now span 32 acres, which visitors and residents will be able to enjoy as a passive public park.

Protecting the extension couldn't have been possible without our generous funders, including an unlikely donor. When the South Shores Cruising Club—a group that provided members with education on boating safety and cruises on local waterways for 66 years—shut down in 2023, members knew that they wanted to find a way to donate their remaining funds to a project helping one of their favorite boating destinations. Once they heard about the Quinn Preserve Extension, they knew it was the perfect fit. Funding was also provided by Ohio Public Works Commission through the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Erie County Community Foundation, the Mylander Foundation, and the Skylar Raine Schambs Conservation Fund.

The Land Conservancy's work on Kelleys Island spans seven properties; to date, we've permanently protected a total 160 acres of land. Between our efforts and the work of other organizations, the island's one-of-a-kind features will always remain intact.

Ninth Conservation Easement

from Jerry and Mary Wurm

Jerry and Mary Wurm have been active supporters of Western Reserve Land Conservancy since 2018. In June of 2024, they finalized their ninth conservation easement, permanently protecting a 138.02-acre parcel of active agricultural land on Marsh Road in Cranberry Township, Crawford County. The land has primarily been used for a rotation of corn and soybeans, with prime soils that allow these crops to thrive.

Conservation easements enable landowners to protect their land while keeping its ownership in the family. By placing this conservation easement, the Wurm family has ensured that the land will be permanently available for agricultural use and simultaneously has protected it from development or subdivision in the future. Due to the property's location—surrounded by road frontage—it was under serious threat of conversion to non-conservation uses.

Donating a conservation easement on this farmland protects an integral way of life for many Ohio residents, as well as an important element of our state's heritage. With over 76,000 farms state-wide, one in eight Ohioans contribute to the state's economy by working in the food and agriculture industry.

The Marsh Road property is one of only two properties protected by the Land Conservancy in Crawford County. The Wurm family also donated a conservation easement on 80 acres of land on Carey Road, only six miles away, where corn and soybeans are grown as well.

In total, the Wurm family has conserved an impressive 984 acres with the Land Conservancy. Their dedication to preserving their farmland through donated conservation easements will allow future generations to benefit from these prime agricultural soils and their high-quality crops, which will be grown for years to come.

HOUGH COMMUNITY GREEN SPACE:

THRIVING COMMUNITIES: Connecting People to Healthy Environments

Our mission extends beyond conserving rural lands and natural habitats—it also embraces our urban centers. We are deeply committed to creating healthy urban environments, a vital component of which involves blight removal and re-greening efforts in cities. For more than a decade, the prevalence of vacant and abandoned homes in urban areas, particularly across Ohio, has negatively impacted property values and created hotspots for crime. Demolishing these derelict structures has been crucial to stabilizing property values and setting the stage for the next phase of urban revitalization: creating parks, enhancing green spaces, and planting trees to foster healthier communities.

PARKS AND GREENSPACES: Vital Community Assets

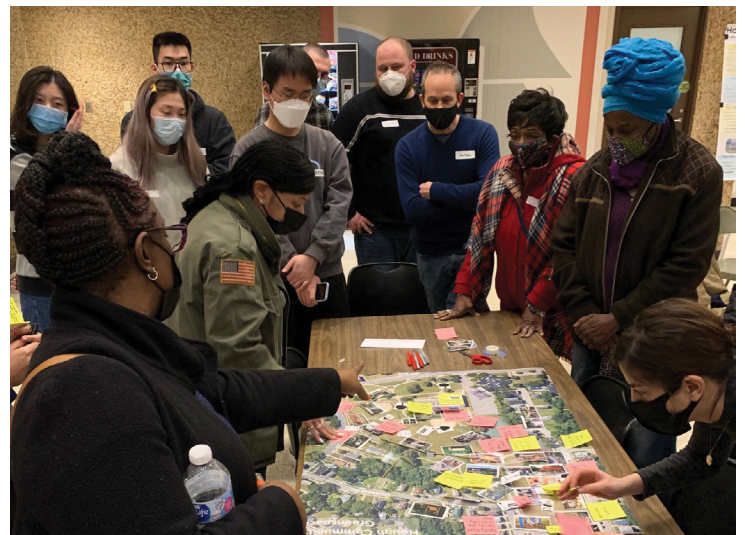
Public parks and green spaces play a pivotal role in making neighborhoods vibrant, healthy, and desirable. They serve as essential gathering places for communities, offering opportunities for outdoor recreation and personal renewal. The Land Conservancy's urban initiatives are focused on increasing access to green space throughout the City of Cleveland. The lingering effects of redlining and the lack of infrastructure investment in neighborhoods, particularly on Cleveland's east side, have led to environmental and social disparities—impacting everything from educational outcomes to infant mortality rates. Addressing environmental equity in these underserved communities is a key priority for us as we work to restore fairness and opportunity to residents who have been overlooked for far too long.



HOUGH COMMUNITY GREEN SPACE: A Neighborhood Transformation

One of our most exciting urban projects to date is the Hough Community Green Space, a transformative effort to bring much-needed, high-quality passive park space to the Hough neighborhood on Cleveland's east side. The 2.6-acre site, once home to the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's John W. Raper School, will be converted into a vibrant, naturalized park. This project will make over this large vacant parcel, building on the energy of the nearby Thurgood Marshall Recreation Center, an important community hub.

Through a robust community engagement process, the Land Conservancy worked closely with residents to shape the vision for the Hough Community Green Space, ensuring it reflects the unique character and desires of the neighborhood. The park will feature meandering walking paths, native plantings, and more than 70 trees to provide shade and help cool the area. Gathering spaces with benches and tables, along with lighting and low perimeter fencing, will enhance both safety and accessibility, inviting walkers and bicyclists to enjoy the park. Accessibility for all is at the forefront of the design, with ADA compliance integrated into the park's development. In addition to these core features, future improvements include a covered shelter for community events, outdoor exercise stations, and upgraded site furnishings. By investing in this historically underserved neighborhood, we aim to restore equity and environmental justice for Hough residents.



A Neighborhood Transformation



LOOKING AHEAD

Construction on the Hough Community Green Space is set to begin in the coming months, and we're excited to see this vision come to life. This project represents a meaningful step toward environmental equity and healthier, more vibrant urban communities. Stay tuned for more updates in future issues of *Landline* as we continue to connect people to nature and create thriving communities across the region.



DATA VISUALIZATION:

After months of collecting information on thousands of data points focused on housing, landscape, and civil infrastructure, one of the proudest moments for our Property Inventory team is the opportunity to present the results of our completed survey, when every single parcel within our specific geography has been evaluated, to our partner community. This is a crucial moment where we transition our team from collecting and assessing the quality of the data collected to creating a strategy to best tell the story of the immense amount of data collected.

This process, called data visualization, uses visual elements to represent large data sets so that the results are accessible to residents, stakeholders, and policy makers in city government. Our data visualization toolkit includes charts, graphs, and maps that tell the story of the data. These elements are then woven into a template called a Story Map. This Story Map tells the narrative of each completed Property Inventory and is linked as a webpage that can be accessible to anyone interested in the results of each project.

The Manager of GIS at Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Sadie Jones, produces each Story Map using ESRI ArcGIS StoryMaps, a story authoring web-based application that allows us to share our maps in the context of the Property Inventory narrative, specific to each community we work with. This application can include maps, narrative text, lists, images, videos, embedded items, and other media. A powerful example of the importance of our Story Map came during our 2023

Cleveland Property Survey. Using survey questions focused on lead abatement, our team noticed spatial relationships between homes with high indications of lead paint in proximity to a school within a specific Cleveland Neighborhood.

Goals we aim to achieve when developing our Story Map include clarity of the information, accessibility, and readability. Tim Dehm, our Planning and Design Specialist, uses his design expertise to create dynamic and accessible charts, helping the audience understand the information quickly and clearly. Tim synthesizes the data collected and shares the findings in a visually simplistic way, choosing charts that showcase the key points in the clearest and most common visual format. A precise understanding of what we have measured is vital. Using clear chart titles, descriptive observations, and overlaying visual annotations onto charts leads to quicker processing of the point of the data visualization.

Almost everything can be counted and measured. We are only in the formative phase of learning how data will change our lives, and it needs the help of a communicator. We rely on data to tell us what has happened, and stories to tell us what it means. By framing this data through stories, we enable decisions to be made faster and inspire others to act. Effectively and efficiently delivering the data collected to our partner communities is crucial, as decisions made using our property inventory data are used to support the policies that determine a community's future.



The Art of Translating Information into Story

For more information about our Property Inventory program, and to view past Property Inventory Story maps please visit our website.



To continue exploring the field of data visualization, please visit ESRI's Introduction to ArcGIS StoryMaps.

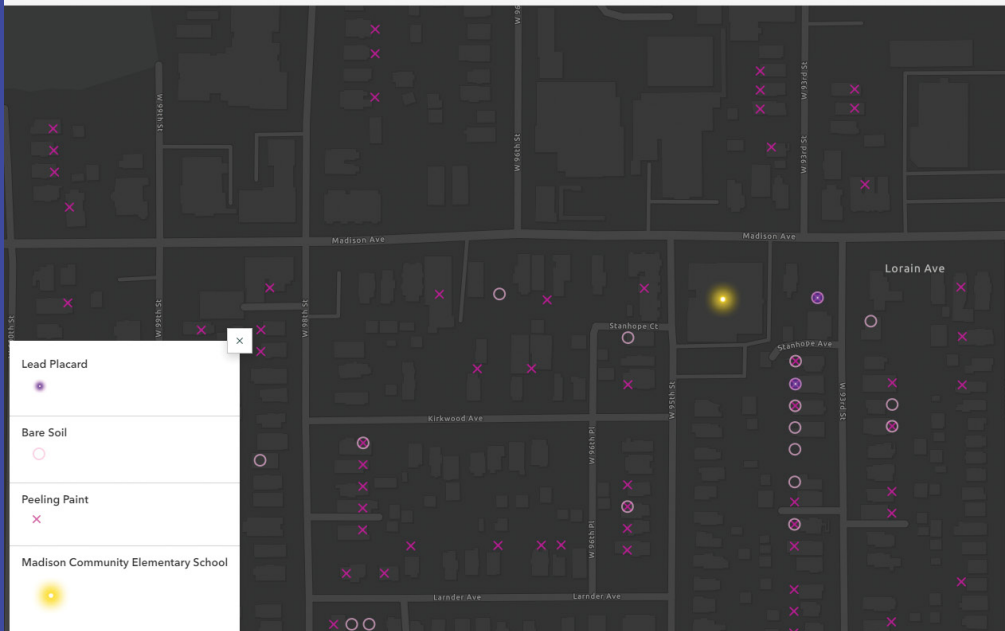


Our team creates and uses charts to convey data collected.

City of Cleveland Property Inventory - 2023



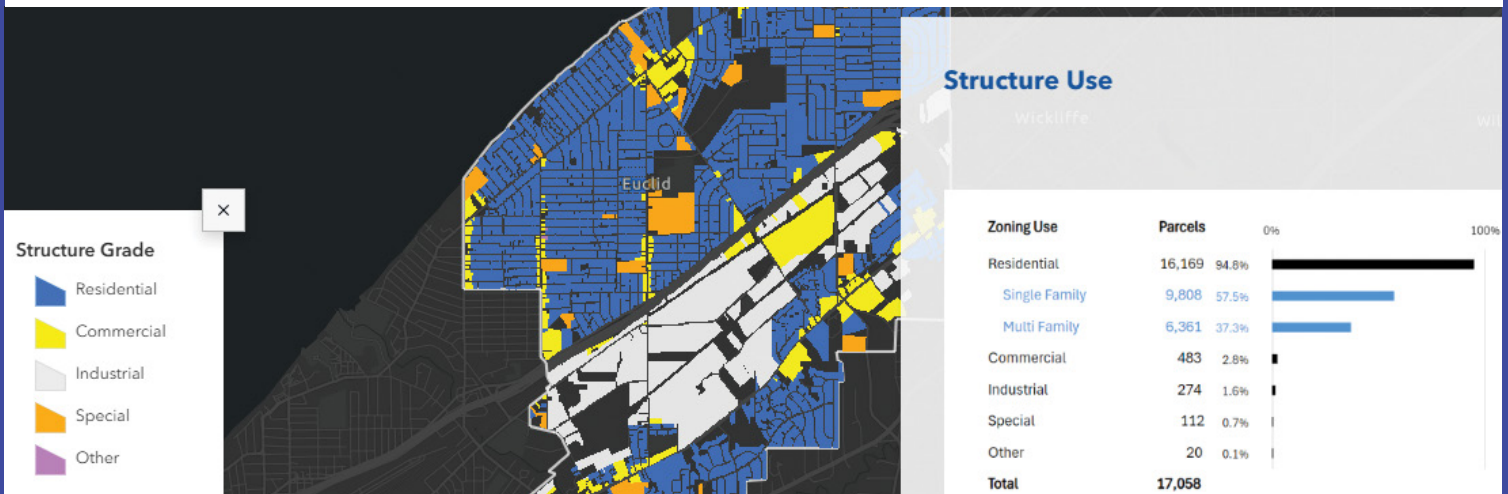
Property Inventory Results Out-of-State Ownership **Lead Hazards and Abatement** Vacant Lots and Dumping Existing City Initiatives Looking Forward



Children under six years old are especially vulnerable to lead risks. These two structures with lead placards are in lots adjacent to Madison Community Elementary School. In addition to having lead placards, both are graded "F - Hazardous," have boarded windows, and surveyors recorded peeling paint and bare soil. One of the property owners has a mailing address in California, and the other is owned by an Ohio-based Limited Liability Company (LLC). Nearby properties have bare soil and peeling paint as well.



This Story Map shows how we represented findings from our 2023 Cleveland Property Survey.



WHAT'S GROWING ON WITH Reforest Our City

The Reforest Our City Program is seeing significant growth. First and foremost, our trees are growing—so much so that some are starting to cast significant shade and provide the ecosystem the service we were looking for.



For example, at Zone Recreation Center, our trees have grown enough in the 3 years since they've been planted to show up in the Cuyahoga County Tree Canopy Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) imaging. This LIDAR imaging is a laser generated aerial map showing the leaf area coverage over land in the county and is the primary tool planners use to assess our urban forests health. A few of our other large sites are also seeing substantial growth, including East Prep and Village Prep in Woodland Hills, Jack Rabbit Hill in Union Miles, and Citizens Leadership Academy East in St. Clair/Superior. All these sites have at least 20 trees, but some have up to 86 trees that were planted at least 3 years ago, meaning their canopy has enough growth to create an impact on the surrounding environment.

Our tree care program is growing with the trees; we've invested significantly in maintenance and watering since 2019, and the results are clear. So far this year, we have performed 878 site visits across 84 different sites. During these site visits, the team will water, prune, and monitor trees for distress, replace dead trees, and pick up any trash on the site. Watering the trees takes up most of the team's focus during the summer, as we water trees for three years after they are planted to ensure the best chance of survival. The team has used approximately 84,000 gallons of water on our trees so far this year. That is double the amount of water we used last year, because the number of trees we have planted has continued to increase each year.

The database of information on our trees is also growing and includes data on tree care interventions and tree site conditions. When tree information is gathered, it is uploaded into ArcGIS as data points that show the current status of the tree, as well as its historical information and any progress pictures. With this information, we are able to plot out exactly where our current trees are and determine what benefits they are giving the local

area. We recently started tracking the temperature around our trees in comparison to the surrounding spaces so that we can see the impact they are making on reducing Cleveland's heat island effect. Tracking this data allows us to make evidence-based decisions about which trees we plant and where we plant them so we can continue to contribute to local urban forestry research.

Our staff is growing, both in size and training, as we take advantage of professional development opportunities to continue becoming trusted regional experts in the field. Earlier this year, Devon Range became a certified Arborist through ISA and both Tom Schrieber and Devon received their Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ). Devon has also stepped into a newly created role, Community Forester. He is able to leverage his arborist training to focus on putting the right trees in the right places in Cleveland neighborhoods, ensuring that we are using the industry's best practices for siting and site prep, species selection, and stock sourcing. We have also filled our Community Forestry Coordinator role with Jen Giles, who will continue to grow and improve our volunteer program by training new Tree Stewards in the best practices in urban forestry.

Lastly, our reputation is growing both in our communities and with our partners. This has led to several large grants, including ones from Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and Save Our Great Lakes, as well as significant donations from private funders. We have also had some new opportunities with local organizations like the Student Conservation Association and many private landowners. We are earning trust in our program by combining excellent tree care with outreach and relationship building within Cleveland, as well as nationally. We are confident this trust will drive more growth in the future.

CLEVLOT:

Demystifying Vacant Land Reuse in Cleveland Neighborhood

Clevelanders are likely all too familiar with the significant amount of vacant land that dots the city. Those unused lots aren't just an eyesore for local communities; they attract litter and crime, along with costing the city additional money for upkeep. Out of Cleveland's total 167,000 parcels, 33,000 sit vacant. Altogether, the vacant parcels amount to 14.7 square miles—equivalent to the combined areas of Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights.

Of those 33,000 vacant parcels, 18,000 parcels are owned by the city through the Cleveland Land Bank. But it hasn't been easy for residents to acquire vacant parcels in their neighborhoods. From trying to find more information on available lots to filling out complex application forms, the process has more closely resembled a maze than a clear path from point A to point B.

The Cleveland Vacant Land Opportunity Tool—better known as CLEVLOT—was a two-year project meant to make it easier for people to reuse vacant land in Cleveland. The goal was to shift the process of buying or leasing vacant land from reactive to proactive; instead of requiring applicants to decipher each step of the Land Bank's vacant land reuse process for themselves, CLEVLOT has worked to provide easy access to necessary information every step of the way. It was made possible by the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which was awarded to Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

Focusing on six southeast-side neighborhoods within a 12 square mile area that contains approximately 20% of the Cleveland Land Bank's inventory, CLEVLOT started in February 2022 by convening with community members, land use experts and city officials to understand common pain points in the Land Bank's process. From there, two stakeholder meetings worked to identify these specific problems. Stakeholders then formed four working groups that focused on different aspects of the vacant land reuse process.

Working groups met periodically over the course of six months to create prototype proposals to address issues, working towards changes like long term support systems for those who have purchased vacant land or enhanced transparency for applicants throughout the entire Land Bank process. Simultaneously, CLEVLOT also held events in different neighborhoods to hear from residents and get ideas.

Community voices brought unique perspectives on topics like potential for artist uses of vacant lots and determining how to prioritize lot reuse.

A showcase was held in November 2023 to share the project's progress, and in December 2023 the CLEVLOT team presented their findings in a public forum at Cleveland State University.

Major reforms to the Land Bank's process start with a one-stop shop website where people will be able to find and apply for a lot, then track their application's progress. A new pricing model has also been created based on fair market value; for more information, visit the Cleveland Land Bank website.

The Land Conservancy is also helping the City rework its policies and procedures to align with community desires, along with publishing FAQs to answer questions about Cleveland Land Bank policies and procedures, mapping stewardship sites, compiling toolkits to help create plans for your parcel, and creating a directory of valuable resources to help anyone easily navigate the process from start to finish.

Now, it's an ongoing process to continue implementing these changes. Following CLEVLOT's conclusion in February 2024, the Land Conservancy has continued to work with the City of Cleveland to assist with a smooth transition. As vacant land is reused and revitalized throughout the city to create valuable community spaces, residents will start to feel the benefits of CLEVLOT for themselves.



Spend Time with Us

Learning About Nature

Western Reserve Land Conservancy is committed to nurturing your love of nature. Through a variety of programs, events, and field trips, the Land Conservancy provides yearlong opportunities for people of all ages to connect with our natural world. Are you aware that we host a virtual symposium in

the winter to help you improve that habitat in your backyard? Or that we offer nature hikes to many of the natural areas we've protected? Or that we gather every July for blueberry picking at one of our farmland easements? Please read on to learn more about the in-person and virtual programs we offer.

IN-PERSON

Vibrant Places—Sponsored by Ohio Real Title

Vibrant Places hikes are free, naturalist-guided walks through properties protected by the Land Conservancy. This series explores the wide variety of natural landscapes, family farms, and urban green spaces the Land Conservancy has played a role in protecting. Vibrant Places hikes can be bird watching along the Lake Erie shoreline, exploring the diversity of spring wildflowers at our Ashcroft Woods or hiking off-trail in a rugged natural area. We're always visiting new places to showcase the range of habitats we are protecting.

Field Explorations

Field Explorations take a deeper dive into a particular nature subject. We enlist experts to host these unique field trips that focus on an array of topics such as mushrooms, moths, owl migration, and Odonata—to name a few. These experiences take us all over the region to different sites, expanding our understanding of nature.

Nature Quests

Nature Quests are fun, free-formed outdoor experiences for kids. Each focus on a seasonal nature happening, such as Monarch tagging in late summer or nest building in the spring. Even though we theme our adventures, you never know what we'll see in nature, so come ready to explore!

VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

Zoom into Nature

Our Zoom into Nature webinar series is offered once a month on a Tuesday evening from October through May. Typically, each program is recorded and available on our YouTube Channel. We have hosted presenters from near and far, featuring a variety of topics such as Chimney Swift conservation, basic tree identification, native orchids of Ohio, flying squirrels, and the wonderful world of lichens. These presentations are low key and fun to watch. Join us during dinner or with a glass of wine to broaden your nature knowledge.

Annual Biodiversity Symposium

For three years, we have presented a virtual symposium to encourage homeowners to bring more biodiversity to their backyards, gardens, and greenspaces. Our event offers a series of talks focused on the ecosystem benefits of landscaping with native plants. Participants can watch our sessions live or opt to watch the recordings on our YouTube Channel. Delivered in partnership with the Cleveland Pollinator and Native Plant Symposium and Nature Spark, we host national and regional experts who inspire us to create habitats that are pleasing to our eyes, and support pollinators and native wildlife species. This Symposium will kick off again in January—stay tuned for details.

Please visit the events page of our website to learn about upcoming field trips and events. A big thank you to all who have joined us for a nature experience. If you haven't, we hope to see you on a hike or webinar soon!

“The goal of our educational program is to help current and future generations develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for our natural world, ultimately leading to its protection.”

Ohio Bat Blitz

On the weekend of August 23, the Land Conservancy co-hosted Ohio's second statewide Bat Blitz in Ashtabula County at the Grand River Campus of The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Presented in collaboration with TNC and The Ohio State University, the Bat Blitz offered both a research component and engaging public outreach opportunities.

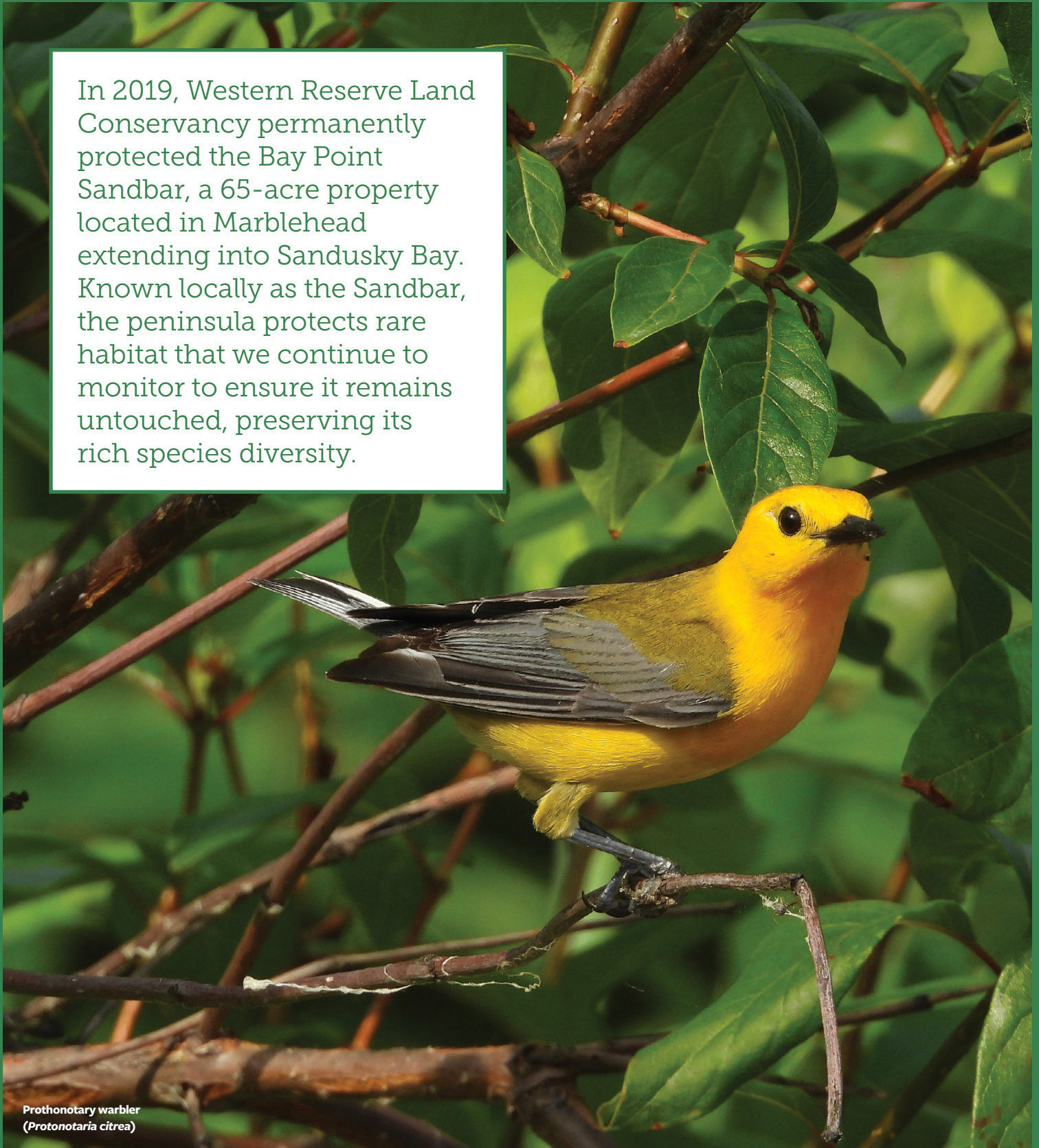
The event brought close to 80 bat biologists from throughout Ohio and surrounding states to survey bat populations at eight natural areas in the county, including the Land Conservancy's Ashcroft Woods and Grand Valley Ranch. Acoustic recorders set up at Grand Valley Ranch picked up 2,732 bat calls, documenting Eastern Red, Hoary, Little Brown, Indiana and Tri-colored Bats. Biologists netted both Big Brown and Eastern Red Bats at both natural areas. This type of research is vital for Ohio's bat species, half of which have already experienced declines of over 95% in the last decade. Biologists work to support the remaining individuals of these species, positioning them to have the best chance at surviving and reproducing to recover their populations. As the scope and severity of threats increase, so does the need for collaborative research, monitoring, and public support for bat conservation.

On the first night of the Bat Blitz, participants were entertained with a live animal program featuring critters that share the night with bats, as well as a variety of displays designed to dispel myths about bats. On the second evening, participants enjoyed an engaging program on moths with Chelsea Gottfried, author of *Gardening for Moths*. Following her presentation, Chelsea set up two light stations and attracted a wide diversity of moths. In addition, an education net was set up on both nights allowing participants an amazing chance to see a Big Brown Bat. Huge thanks to the bat biologists for handling the Big Brown Bats and giving us this up-close look!



THE BAY POINT SANDBAR:

In 2019, Western Reserve Land Conservancy permanently protected the Bay Point Sandbar, a 65-acre property located in Marblehead extending into Sandusky Bay. Known locally as the Sandbar, the peninsula protects rare habitat that we continue to monitor to ensure it remains untouched, preserving its rich species diversity.



Prothonotary warbler
(*Protonotaria citrea*)

Pristine Habitat Supports Rare Species

Coastal development pressure has led to 78% of Ohio's coastline being converted from its initial natural state. Nearly all remaining wetlands along Lake Erie's shoreline have been extensively modified through the addition of dikes and other erosion control measures; however, this property is unique in that it remains unaltered.

The Sandbar's impressive number of rare plants and animals can be directly attributed to its pristine habitat. Field Biologist Judy Semroc has conducted biological inventories of the site since 2010. During these surveys, she has observed many species of plants, insects, reptiles, amphibians, and birds. Judy's field work has documented three listed plants, several county record moths, a threatened beetle, and 113 different species of birds—16 of which are classified by the State of Ohio as Endangered, Threatened, or Species of Concern. Noteworthy birds observed include Prothonotary Warbler, Common Tern, Rusty Blackbird, and Great Egret.

Judy first discovered the State Threatened Hairy-necked Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela hirticollis*) in 2010 and has seen it on subsequent visits. She noted finding 15 individuals using the sandy beach area on the south side of the Sandbar. Over the years, she's watched the open water in this area widen due to a lake water breach during the high-water levels in 2021, thus shrinking the available habitat for this state-listed tiger beetle. Long term protection of the Bay Point Sandbar not only provides habitat for rare species, but it benefits the water quality of Sandusky Bay. Development of our coastline causes sediments and nutrients to runoff into the water. With long-term conservation, the wetlands and forests on the Sandbar will continue to absorb and slow the movement of this pollution into Sandusky Bay and provide outstanding habitat for Ohio's plants and animals.

Acquisition and restoration of the property was made possible through grants received from Ohio EPA's Water Resource Restoration Sponsorship Program (WRRSP); Clean Ohio Greenspace Conservation Program; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant; and US Fish and Wildlife Service's Sustain Our Great Lakes Program; as well as some private donations.



Sandy beach along the Bay Point Sandbar



Hairy-necked Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela hirticollis*)



Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)

OUT & ABOUT

REGION CELEBRATIONS

Each summer, we host receptions in our western, southern, and eastern geographic service areas to celebrate our landowners and partners, along with the accomplishments we have all achieved together.

This year, the Southern Region Celebration was held at The Village Westfield Center Park. Kicking off the event, attendees enjoyed a hike on one of Western Reserve Land Conservancy's projects, the Quetzal property, now owned by the Village of Westfield Center. The Quetzal property spans over 45 acres, hosting young forests that are habitats to many species of birds and bats. During dinner, Western Reserve Land Conservancy staff and partners shared more about the year's conservation achievements in the region. The Eastern Region Celebration brought together over 140 landowners, partners, and donors at Grand Valley Ranch. Guests listened to a panel of unique perspectives on the experience of conservation and agriculture, our Sporting Circle program, and our partnership with US Fish and Wildlife on completing the Grand Valley Ranch project. Lastly, we celebrated our Western Region in September at Main Street Beach in Vermilion. The event showcased the park's incredible transformation, made possible by the City of Vermilion, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, our partners, and many generous donors. Throughout the evening, we honored the Firelands Chapter and our dedicated landowners. It was a wonderful night overlooking the lake.



ART SHOW WITH IAN ADAMS

Every quarter, the Land Conservancy hosts a local artist who proudly displays their work on the walls of our Conservation Center.

From photographers to painters and everything in between, we have played host to some extraordinary art throughout the years. We invite you to come experience Ohio through the lens of Ian Adams in an exhibit showcasing his captivating nature photography. Ian Adams is an environmental photographer, writer, and educator specializing in Ohio's natural, rural, historical, and garden areas. Twenty-three books of his color photography have been published, and he has produced more than 65 Ohio calendars and conducted over 200 seminars and workshops in nature, garden, and digital photography throughout North America. The public is invited to our headquarters during our office hours M-F 9AM-5PM to explore the art for yourself.



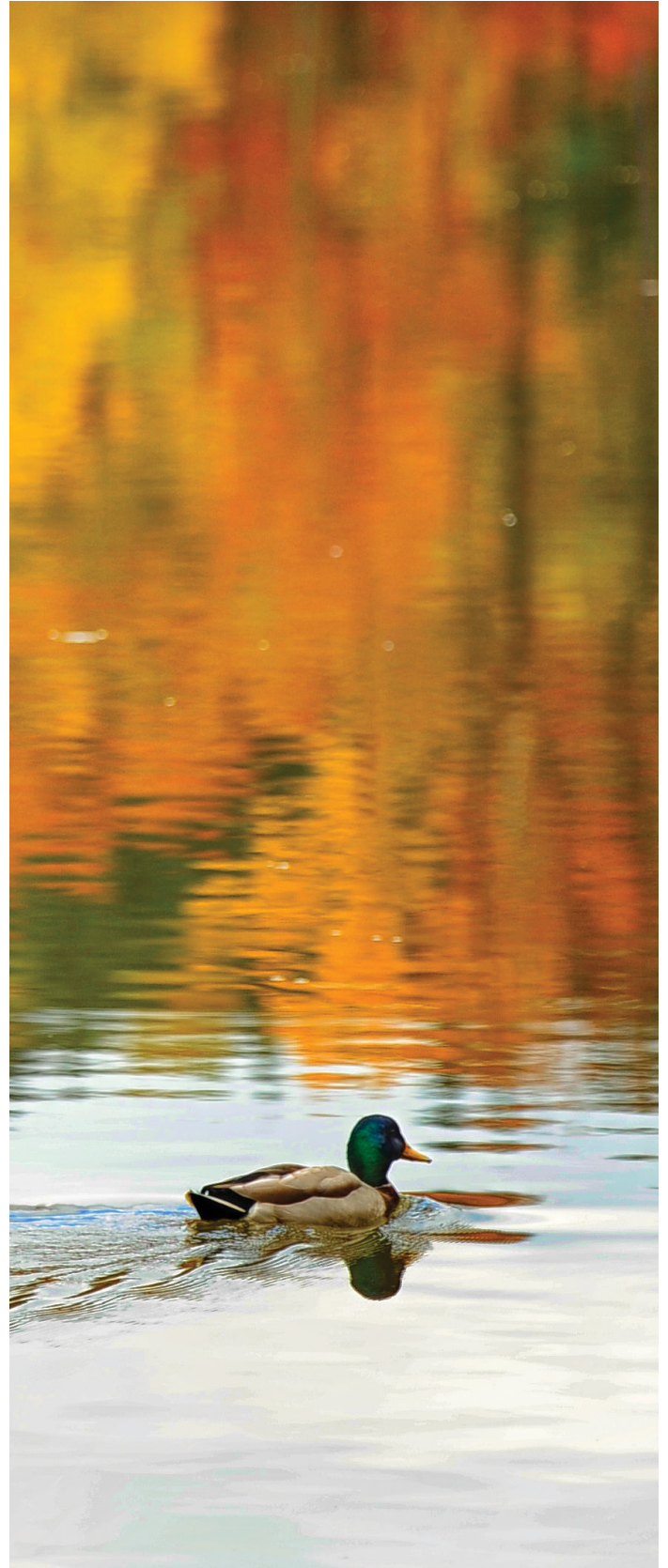
STEWARDS EVENT

The Stewards Event on October 3 marked a delightful night of celebration, with over 100 members of the White Oak Legacy Society, board members, donors, and staff in attendance.

Held at the Shoreby Club, attendees enjoyed spectacular views of the lake throughout the evening. During the program, we honored our retiring trustees, recognized White Oak Legacy Society members, and presented the Art of Caring award.

This year we had several retiring trustees: Larry Bettcher, Keymah Durden, Ruth Eppig, David Goerig, Jane Neubauer, and Loyal Wilson. These trustees have given their time and expertise and guided this organization through critical milestones. Their leadership has shaped our strategies, strengthened our partnerships, and helped to fulfill our mission. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for their thoughtful leadership and unwavering commitment to our work throughout their tenure on the board.

White Oak Legacy Society members are supporters who have made a lasting commitment to our mission through their estate plans. We celebrate their generosity, which enables us to continue our land protection and urban revitalization work that will benefit generations to come. This spirit of generosity is embodied in the Art of Caring award, which was awarded, posthumously, in honor of Skylar Raine Schambs. Skylar's immense passion for conservation and the natural world has left an enduring impact, and we are committed to carrying forward her legacy through the Skylar Raine Schambs Conservation Fund, dedicated to protecting and preserving the land she cherished. The award was accepted by her parents, Faith Pescatore and Gary Schambs.



Nature Notes:

Why Do Leaves Turn Colors in the Fall?

As the summer winds down, the days grow shorter, and the temperatures cool off, some of us look forward to the fall colors that sweep across Ohio.



Black tupelo leaves shift to a blazing red, tulip poplar leaves glow a bright yellow, and sweetgum leaves seem to display every color, turning yellow, orange, purple, and red. Autumn puts an important part of a deciduous tree's seasonal growth cycle on display. It also creates one of the most beautiful times of the year.

You may stop to wonder: why do leaves turn colors in the fall when they are typically green the rest of the year? The primary reason comes down to chlorophyll, a tiny pigment molecule found within plants, cyanobacteria, and algae. Chlorophyll absorbs blue and red wavelengths but reflects green wavelengths. This is why it appears green to our eyes. Chlorophyll captures energy from the sunlight it absorbs. Through a process called photosynthesis, this captured energy is used to convert carbon dioxide and water into sugar. Sugar, in the form of glucose, serves as the food for the tree.

In the fall, trees understand environmental cues indicating that winter is coming. With less direct sunlight, sugar production begins to slow down. If deciduous leaves freeze, the resulting tissue damage makes them no longer able to photosynthesize. There is no point in keeping around leaves that will be dead come spring, so the tree sheds them. To accomplish this, the tree releases a hormone that encourages the leaves to be on their way.

Without the tree's nutrient support, the chlorophyll in the leaves begins to break down and other pigment molecules step into the spotlight. The loss of chlorophyll reveals underlying yellow and orange pigments known as carotenoids. Carotenoids have been present in leaves all year but have been masked by bright green chlorophyll throughout the growing season. Another pigment, called anthocyanin, appears dark red to purple and is not attached to cell membranes like chlorophyll and carotene. Anthocyanins float around in the sap and are the result of light hitting residual sugars trapped in the leaves. These small changes in chemistry produce stunning visual results that make the autumn season a joy to witness each year.

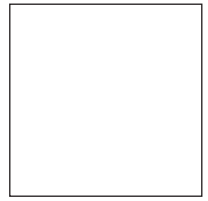
Restoration at the South Farm:

Sherwin Bird Sanctuary

In the spring of 2022, the Land Conservancy began the restoration project of turning 24 acres of old field, hay field, and invasives trees and shrubs into prairie at our South Farm—Sherwin Bird Sanctuary.

The process began with the removal of 11 acres of invasive trees and shrubs along with the grinding of their stumps. Once the hay was cut and baled in August of 2022, Land Conservancy staff and volunteers mowed the old field habitat. After allowing a few weeks of regrowth, herbicide was applied to the project site in order to create a clean slate for the spring 2023. With the help of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Wildlife Program, we were able to plant 24 acres of warm season grasses and forbs consisting of 31 species in May of 2023.

Even though the 24 acres of warm season grasses and forbs are thriving, the maintenance within the field is far from finished. The Land Conservancy is currently managing the field for invasive species which include mullein, porcelain berry, and garlic mustard. Also, each fall after the growing season, the 24-acre field is mowed to allow sunlight to reach the ground and increase that soil temperatures more rapidly in the spring. We are working to plant an additional 20 acres of warm season grasses and forbs in Waite Hill in the fall of 2024.



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