



The Rookery

FALL 2017



Marking 20 Years of Conservation

Twenty years ago, Frank Harris and his family entrusted Black Swamp Conservancy to protect their beloved lake-side retreat. As you'll read in this issue of *The Rookery*, Frank was the first conservation-minded landowner to partner with our organization. And, his actions paved the way for so many other conservation landowners. Today the Conservancy has partnered with more than 100 families to permanently preserve more than 16,750 acres of conserved land stretching across thirteen counties in northwest Ohio.

I had the pleasure of working with Frank when he donated his fifth conservation easement to the Conservancy in 2008. That final transaction achieved Frank's conservation vision, forever protecting his

entire 112 acre marsh – a place that he and his family had built so many memories.

In 2016 the Conservancy joined forces with Frank's daughter, Gingi, in defending the property against an adverse possession (squatter's rights) claim that had been filed by a neighboring landowner. Though not a quick or easy resolution, our defense was successful and, without compromising the integrity of the property or its conservation easement, we settled the case through mediation earlier this year.

This is one of many examples of the work we do to ensure that our conserved properties are truly protected forever. Conserving your property with Black Swamp Conservancy means we are

prepared to defend it, whether a challenge arises twenty or one hundred years down the road.

The Conservancy has come a long way since Frank signed his first conservation easement twenty years ago. We now tend to a large portfolio of conserved lands, are leading landscape-scale restoration projects and are making great strides in educating the community about the importance of conservation in northwest Ohio. This growth is the result of the collective efforts of so many dedicated people; landowners, volunteers and supporters alike.

Thank you for helping make conservation a reality in our community.

With warm regards,

Rob Krain
Executive Director

First Winter Walk of 2018

January 20, 2018 • Bell Woods

Watch for details on  



The First PIN ON THE MAP



Gingi Rothman

Twenty years ago, the Harris family trusted our fledgling organization to care for and protect this place they so dearly love.



“We grew up in the greater Toledo, Ohio, area, and spent all of our free time here at the marsh and lake,” explained Gingi Rothman, daughter of the late Frank Harris. “Dad and my brother had always hunted here, and it was an important part of all our lives growing up.”

Frank’s belief in the value of protecting environmentally sensitive areas led him to approach the Conservancy about preserving the property. He recognized the importance of protecting habitat from development to provide recreational opportunities and improve regional quality of life.

“Wildlife in the preserve has grown from frogs and carp in the 1970s to the broad and important variety you see here today,” said Terry Breymaier, a neighbor and Conservancy volunteer. While homeowners and renters in the nearby communities initially wanted only access to the lake, they have come to appreciate - and even become passionate about - the area’s wildlife. In particular, residents are very protective of the migration of Blanding’s Turtles from the marsh to the Lake Erie beach to lay their eggs, and especially the young turtles’ journey back to the marsh. “Everyone here - especially the kids - works to make sure the young turtles are protected,” he said.

Before the days of GIS (Geographic Information Systems), we marked our protected properties with pins on a map of northwest Ohio. The Frank M. Harris Nature Preserve was the first pin (the easement was signed Dec. 26, 1997), and was originally platted as residential property (and roads were paved). Since the 1920s, the preserve area has been diked and flooded as a wetland.

The first six acres of this coastal marsh was acquired in 1997; subsequent easements through 2008 put the total property at 112 acres. The area is partially surrounded by development today.

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20 years of conservation

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In addition, the community is passionate about its birds. “The preserve has become an important stop for migrating birds, especially during the ‘Biggest Week in American Birding’ each May,” said Breymaier. “You can see all of the same birds here at the preserve, without the crush of all the birders.”

Twenty years ago, the Harris family trusted our fledgling organization to care for and protect this place they so dearly love. As our first forward-thinking landowners, they opened the door for so many others and helped set the stage for our protected land portfolio, which now covers more than 135 properties and 16,750 acres.



Photo courtesy of Terry Breymaier

GREAT BLACK SWAMP

photo exhibit
at Secor Metropark



Black Swamp Conservancy has assembled a 35-image photography exhibit at the National Center for Nature Photography at Secor Metropark, Toledo.

The Great Black Swamp exhibit tells the story of northwest Ohio’s unique landscape and wildlife, from the pre-European, wild origins of the historic swamp to our current conditions. The exhibit then looks forward to how the swamp’s revival might be the key to protecting our region’s water supply.

The exhibit features photographs by local photographers Art Weber, Brian Zwiebel, Michael Basista, Andrew Cole and others. It also unveils a new map of the historic swamp created by designer Margo Puffenberger.

The National Center for Nature Photography at Secor Metropark is the perfect setting for this exhibit. The Center was established to inspire reverence for

natural fauna, flora and their habitats through photography, and to promote a greater understanding and support for preservation of the natural world. Hours for *The Great Black Swamp* exhibit are Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is free. The exhibit runs through November 26 at Secor Metropark, and then will be displayed in other locations, including the Toledo Zoo Aquarium in early 2018.



NETWORKING IN THE WOODS

Forrest Woods Nature Preserve was the setting for a Land Trust Stewardship Retreat. We served as hosts for the October 19-20 outdoors retreat, with participants attending from land trusts in Indiana and Ohio.

“I found the retreat a great experience to learn...

from other land trust partners,” said Richard Lutz from the Buckeye Trail Association. “It also gave us some new ideas our organization hasn’t tried yet.”

The two-day retreat was designed so participants could share ideas, brainstorm new programs and network with other conservation professionals. “I was surprised at how quickly we found common topics to discuss,” said Chris Collier, the Conservancy’s conservation manager. “We were also able to identify areas where one person could offer advice to the others, and share success stories.”

“It was important to us to share challenges and success stories with stewardship colleagues from different locations,” said

Pete McDonald of the Western Reserve Land Conservancy in Ohio. “We learned a lot from the other organizations.”

The retreat included nature walks, overnight camping and some collaborative habitat management, where we were able to show off our recent restoration and reforestation projects. “Forrest Woods was a great place to see the reforestation process of a project,” Lutz said.

“The reforestation and wetland restoration were impressive,” said McDonald. “It was especially fascinating to learn about the complications of restoring stream corridors in light of the ditch agreements and the potential for petitions for ditch cleaning” in this area of the state.

“It was interesting that all groups, with fairly different approaches to conservation, still shared more in common than differences,” said Casey Jones of ACRES Land Trust in Indiana. “It’s always nice to get a group of professionals together to do management work ... and the setting was nice.”

“There were so many opportunities for brainstorming throughout the retreat,” Collier said. “I’m looking forward to pursuing the ideas we discussed here, and planning for the next one!”

Riding in Style AT THE CONSERVANCY

Thanks to a generous donation from the Mannik & Smith Group, Maumee, Conservancy staff has a spacious Ford truck to use for property management and site visits.

Besides looking smart and professional, it’s got the room to carry all the supplies we need. And it’s the perfect “vehicle” to promote clean water, good food and wild places.

Thank you!



Notes from the Field

It's a bittersweet feeling that this will be my last notes from the field for Black Swamp Conservancy, as my wife and I relocate to Washington, D.C. But I am grateful to have this last chance to thank all of you who make our work possible.

In my time with the Conservancy we have completed some exciting projects protecting and restoring native habitat, improving water quality, creating public parks, and protecting family farms from sprawling development. Along with conservation projects, I have also had the pleasure to participate in a number of Conservancy events ranging from stewardship days to canoe paddles. Each and every event has given me the opportunity to meet a few of you passionate people who help make conservation a reality in our community.



“We need to love the near with the same excitement that we love the exotic.” - David Gessner’s book *Return of the Osprey*

I recently read David Gessner’s book *Return of the Osprey*, which I would highly recommend to people interested in learning about a remarkable conservation success story. There was one quote in this novel that really stood out to me, “We need to love the near with the same excitement that we love the exotic.” I believe this quote really underscores the importance of supporting local conservation groups, be that land trusts, park districts, or other organizations in the area.

It’s really easy to romanticize scenic mountain vistas, rugged coastlines, and vast canyons (I do it all the time), but it’s important to remember that there is beauty right outside your door. That’s our goal at Black Swamp Conservancy, to make sure that our rivers and streams, Great Black Swamp wetlands, and our Great Lake are preserved and protected for people to enjoy.

Getting a chance to walk in remnant Great Black Swamp Woods, see the spring wildflower blooms, watch the trees explode with color, and paddle along the Maumee are a few of many experiences I will never forget from my time with Black Swamp



Conservancy. Thankfully, through our work and the work of our partners, and most importantly your support, we are helping to ensure that these experiences can be had by all.

Thank you all for your passion for Ohio’s natural resources and for helping to make Black Swamp Conservancy the organization it is today. I am honored to have had the chance to start my career here and cannot wait to keep following the organization’s work.

See you out there!

Chris



COMMUNITY REWARDS

You can designate Black Swamp Conservancy as your favorite charity through the Kroger Community Rewards Program. BSC will receive a share of each qualifying purchase.

Register online (with your Kroger Plus card) at www.krogercommunityrewards.com.

Or contact us at bsc@blackswamp.org or **419.833.1025**. We will send instructions or help you enroll.

Our thanks to Kroger for their support of Black Swamp Conservancy!



FUNDING APPROVED FOR *St. Joseph River* WETLANDS PROJECT

The Conservancy's St. Joseph Wetlands project, a beautiful 146-acre property along both banks of the St. Joseph River in Williams County, Ohio, recently received grant approval from the Wetland and Riparian Resource Sponsorship Program (WRRSP). It's an exciting project in a critical area of the St. Joseph River watershed that impacts water quality in the Maumee River and Lake Erie.

The east and west branches of the St. Joseph River converge on this property, which contains the highest quality of wetlands, referred to as Category 3. The property runs along a mile-long section of the river which drains counties in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana.



The floodplain is a rich ecosystem that feeds the St. Joseph River, which converges with the St. Marys River near Fort Wayne, Indiana, to form the Maumee River. Restoration of this important part of the Lake Erie watershed will moderate flooding, improve water quality and bring important plants and animals back to the region. The project will impact the full length of the Maumee River watershed and its millions of people.

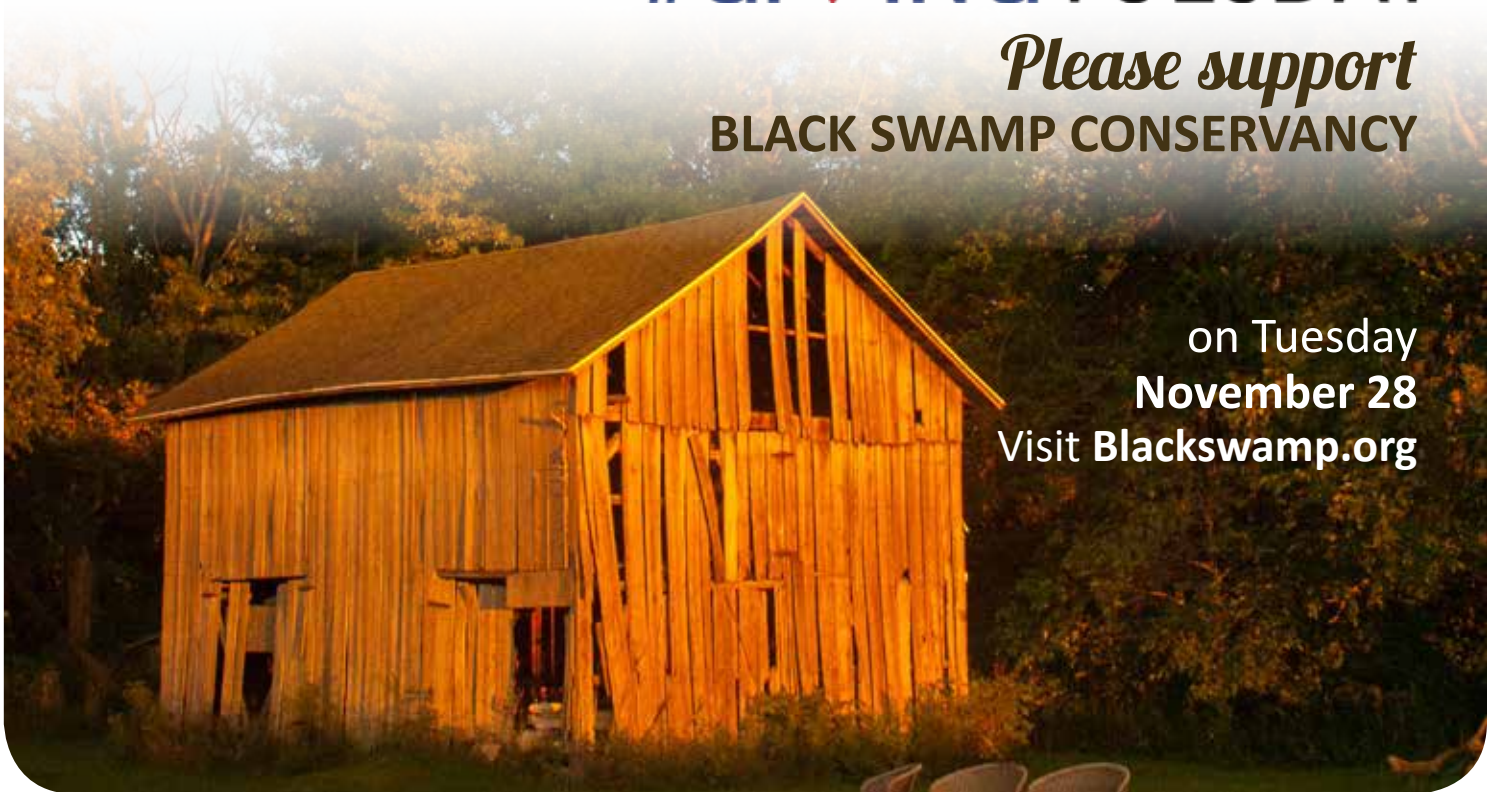
This project will also protect important habitat for wildlife - including the federally-threatened copperbelly water snake and clubshell mussel.

Projects funded through WRRSP take about two years to close. Once we work through this process, we will pursue public access and restoration of a small portion of the site currently not in natural habitat.

#GIVINGTUESDAY™

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BLACK SWAMP CONSERVANCY

on Tuesday
November 28
Visit Blackswamp.org





PROJECTS TO IMPROVE SANDUSKY RIVER ACCESS

Two Conservancy projects are focusing on improving Sandusky River quality in the Fremont, Ohio, area, while offering residents a natural wildlife habitat and a public park.

The former River Cliff Golf Club was acquired by the Conservancy through the Clean Ohio Fund, and was gifted to the Sandusky County Park District for

conversion to parkland and improved river access.

The 80-acre property features a wooded area along the river that provides habitat for many birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, including an active Bald Eagle nest. Restoration will expand the habitat, as well as improving habitat of the river for fish.

The 78-acre River Redhorse Bend property consists of a 66-acre farm with 16 acres of forest and wetlands. The farmland will be returned to a more natural state to create more access to the Sandusky River. Acquisition of this property helps to protect rare habitats with wetlands while enhancing the community's connection to the area.

Both properties are along the river, and both will benefit greatly from wetland restoration and efforts to improve the water quality of the Lake Erie Watershed. They'll also serve as strong educational tools about land use along waterways.

The property will demonstrably improve water quality along the Sandusky River, while expanding nearby wildlife habitat. In addition, the Conservancy will be able to measure these improvements over time. In the meantime, the Sandusky County Park District will do what it does best, by planning and restoring the sites for public access.



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At Black Swamp Conservancy...

We take direct action to permanently preserve northwest Ohio's natural habitats and family farms for the benefit of future generations.

By protecting our valuable land and water resources we are supporting healthy communities with strong, sustainable economies.

Our work ensures the diverse habitats of our region will be protected for generations and that our children and their children will forever be able to enjoy this special place.

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White-tailed deer photo (at right) courtesy of George Sydlowski.

Your support is helping to protect and restore northwest Ohio's rivers and streams, providing critical habitat for birds and animals - like this white-tailed deer.



The
Rookery
FALL 2017

or Current Resident



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