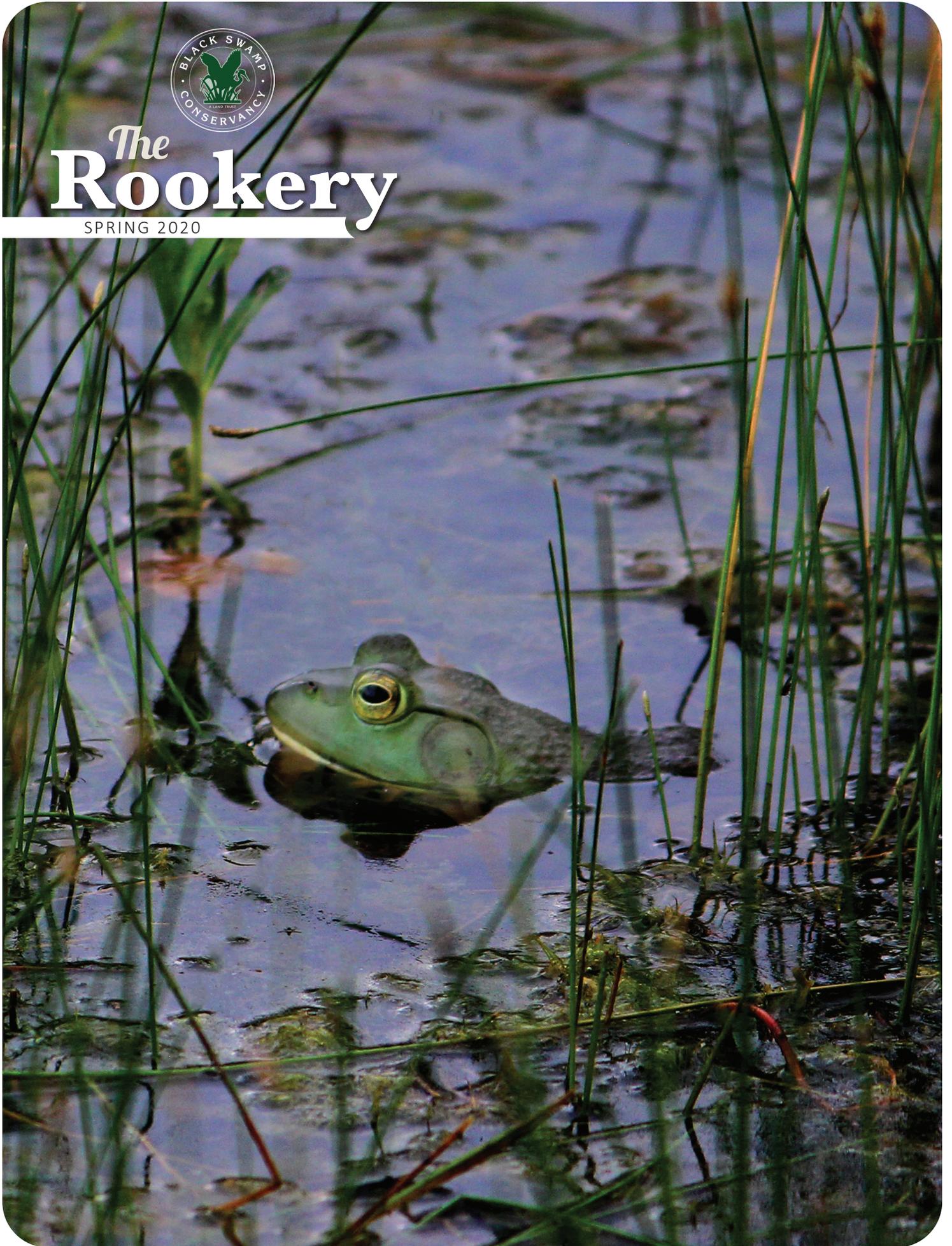




The **Rookery**

SPRING 2020





UNDENIABLE HEALING POWER OF NATURE

These last several months have been challenging for all of us as the threat of Coronavirus has disrupted nearly every aspect of our daily lives. Through all of this upheaval, the undeniable healing power of nature has remained a constant and the importance of its protection has been more evident than ever before.

Data from Google's COVID-19 Mobility Reports show that while workplace, recreation, retail, grocery and other travel significantly dropped off – use of parks, trails and nature preserves rose by upwards of 100 percent. This unprecedented use of natural spaces brought about by the pandemic demonstrates the critical need for open space within each and every local community.

While things have been far from normal at Black Swamp Conservancy, our commitment to conservation in northwest Ohio remains steadfast. After having to cancel this year's Bluegrass and Green Acres fundraiser at the last minute, our staff and Board transitioned to working remotely. And, we have kept busy – completing land protection projects that

were in process and advancing new and exciting restoration initiatives. We have also developed new protocols to ensure that we are able to safely continue caring for our preserved properties through monitoring and sound management activities.

There are many voices in today's landscape, all with messages of legitimate and heartfelt need. But the need that connects all of us, today and into an unknown future, is the continued ability to protect this shared planet and the abundant, healing nature it provides.

Thank you for your support of Black Swamp Conservancy and for helping to make this critical work possible.



Stay well,



Rob Krain
Executive Director

*remains
constant*





PAT & CLINT'S

prairie

In 2015, the Conservancy purchased a small farmhouse in rural Wood County and established a permanent office space. That moved our daily operations closer to our work. The office abuts Bell Woods, one of the finest remnants of the Historic Great Black Swamp, which is protected by a permanent conservation agreement.

The property also features thirty acres of prairie habitat. Though the prairie was not yet protected, the owners were very supportive of outdoor education and have allowed us to use it for programming and public use. Over the years, we have hosted thousands of community members for nature walks, photography workshops, hayrides and other activities.

Last year the owners decided to sell the prairie. Located across the street from Eastwood Schools and next to protected natural habitat, the property was prime for residential development and offers were quickly made.

“Fearing that the prairie could be lost forever, the Conservancy sprang into action to protect it, exercising a right of first refusal that we held on the property.”



The right of first refusal gave us a narrow thirty day window to complete the purchase, which was not enough time to secure needed grant funding. We are incredibly grateful for supporters Chuck and Carol Stocking, who very generously agreed to purchase the property and hold it for us while we sought funding. With matching funds provided by the Stockings, the Conservancy was able to secure a grant from the Clean Ohio Conservation fund and complete the purchase earlier this year.



In honor of the late Clint Mauk, a Conservancy founder, and his wife Pat, the property is being dedicated as Pat & Clint Mauk's Prairie. A small ceremony is being planned for later this summer with the Mauk family.





EXPANDING A BELOVED

Community Park



Everyone who lives in Bowling Green, Ohio has a park within 1.5 miles of their home. It's a point of pride for the city, especially for the Parks and Recreation Department, which has worked diligently for many years to create open spaces that appeal to the many recreational interests of the community.

Wintergarden/St. John's Nature Preserve is one of those parks. Pieced together over time through five separate land acquisitions, the preserve offers more than 100 acres of meadows, forests, woods and wetlands. Miles of trails loop the property, an observation center gives visitors an up-close look at native wildlife, and a full-time staff of naturalists host educational programs year-round.

Last year, Black Swamp Conservancy entered into a purchase agreement to acquire 20-acre property containing woods and grasslands that share a boundary with the existing park. It is a critical addition to Wintergarden Woods – the last opportunity to expand the park.

“We had been in discussions with the sellers of this property for several years,” remarked The Conservancy’s executive director, Rob Krain. “We are really glad that they chose to work with us – this was a great opportunity to expand upon a beloved community resource.”

A grant from the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund made the purchase possible, with matching funds provided by the Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Foundation. The parks will own and manage the property for public use. The city also entered into a conservation agreement with Black Swamp Conservancy, ensuring that the entirety of Wintergarden / St. John's Nature Preserve will remain a public greenspace forever.





RESTORING LAND

to Improve Water Quality

Wetlands are some of the most biologically productive habitats on earth. They are also incredibly efficient at removing pollutants from the water. That's why Black Swamp Conservancy has been working so hard in recent years to restore wetlands across northwest Ohio.

With the announcement of Governor Mike DeWine's new H2Ohio initiative last summer, the State made a commitment to ensuring safe and clean water for all Ohioans. Naturally, wetland restoration is a key strategy for meeting this objective.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources is taking the lead on wetland restorations under H2Ohio, and Black Swamp Conservancy has partnered with the agency on four important new projects. Engineering and design work is now underway, and we will be working hard to complete the restorations between now and next spring.

- Red Horse Bend is a 92-acre property located on the Sandusky River just outside of the city of Fremont. The Conservancy purchased the property in 2015 and is now transforming the frequently flooded farmland back to functioning floodplain. When the restoration is completed, we will be giving the property to Sandusky County Park District for use as a public park.
- At Forrest Woods Nature Preserve in Paulding County, we are working to create a series of wetlands along a headwater stream flowing to the Maumee River. This wetland series, known as a treatment train, will help capture nutrients, reduce erosion and restore headwater stream habitat.
- At the St. Joseph's River Confluence Preserve in Williams County, we are retiring 20 acres of farmland and restoring it back to natural habitat. This project will also improve a low diversity CRP field, significantly increasing habitat value and nutrient retention.
- We recently purchased a second property on the St. Joseph River utilizing the H2Ohio program. This 95-acre property will be restored to a mix of floodplain forest and wetlands, with a small area being reserved for ecologically responsible small-scale agricultural use. A channelized drainage ditch on the property is also being repaired and returned to stream conditions.





A NEW PRESERVE

on the Maumee River



Conservation is a team sport, and Black Swamp Conservancy often works with partners – park districts, state & federal agencies and other nonprofit organizations – to protect and restore land in northwest Ohio. Such was the case when the Henry-Wood Sportsman’s Alliance approached the Conservancy last year about a property along the Maumee River that they had their eyes on.

“I’ve lived in Henry County my whole life, over fifty years, and I’ve never seen a parcel like this come available” said Greg Carson, President of Henry-Wood Sportsman’s Alliance. “This was a rare opportunity to buy a piece of land that has been in the same family for more than 100 years.”

Indeed, the property is a special place. It contains 100 acres along a three-quarters of a mile stretch of the river that include a section of the historic towpath canal utilized by the Buckeye Trail Association, mature oak / hickory forest and some cropland that will be restored to natural habitat. Initial surveys identified more than 140 native plants and 120 wildlife species using the site.

Black Swamp Conservancy spearheaded this purchase on the Alliance’s behalf. The Conservancy secured grant funding through the Clean Ohio Greenspace Program and managed the land protection process. At the end of April, Henry-Wood Sportsman’s Alliance purchased the property and granted a perpetual conservation agreement to Black Swamp Conservancy – ensuring the property will forever be a nature preserve.



“We are excited to see the Alliance use this property to engage a new generation of outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen,” remarked Elisabeth Anderson, Conservation Associate with the Conservancy.





A TURTLE

Hotspot

In 2019, The Toledo Zoo along with partners at OSU's Ohio Biodiversity Conservation Partnership, the Ohio Division of Wildlife, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the University of Purdue-Ft. Wayne were awarded a Competitive State Wildlife Grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct Blanding's Turtle surveys in Michigan and Ohio.

The goal of this project was to fill in data-gaps by assessing Blanding's Turtles (an Ohio Threatened Species) populations using standardized surveys, genetic analyses, and distribution models to guide management efforts. In Ohio, we had two, 6-person teams surveying 37 wetlands throughout the northern part of the state from April through August. This effort resulted in capture of 217 Blanding's Turtles, 689 Snapping Turtles, and 2,215 Painted Turtles.

These surveys identified one of Black Swamp Conservancy's properties in Ottawa County as one of the most significant hotspots in Ohio - with 103 Blanding's Turtles from all age classes, a truly rare scenario. The success of this site has been the source of much discussion and will likely play a role in long-term Blanding's Turtle conservation efforts in the state.

Overall, the Zoo's statewide efforts resulted in the largest turtle dataset in Ohio. These data will provide important information to ensure turtles continue to be a part of the rich natural heritage of the Lake Erie Basin.

We are always looking for more information regarding Blanding's Turtles and encourage anyone who has seen one to email: turtles@toledo zoo.org

*Written by Matt Cross,
Conservation Biologist with the Toledo Zoo*





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Clean Water, Good Food, Wild Places

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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Your support helps to protect and restore northwest Ohio's land and water resources, providing critical habitat for wildlife.



The
Rookery

SPRING 2020

or Current Resident



FIND US ONLINE AT BlackSwamp.org

