

Nature News

Newsletter of the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy



Spring 2025



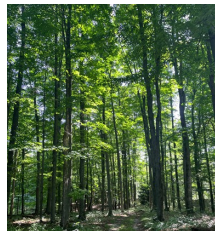
Protecting and Enhancing the Environment at Otter's End Farm

By Dave Foley

(previously included in our 2024 Annual Report)

A large tract of property in Wexford County, known as Otter's End Farms, was one of the first lands that received a conservation easement in this county. The name Otter's End comes from an ongoing conflict with otters, that at times, have decimated the fish population in the pond on the property. Once an otter takes up residence, they will likely eat up every fish in a matter of weeks. When otters appear now, they are encouraged to move along (and in season, trapped.)

On July 9, 2024, I spent time touring this property with the owner, who has truly embraced his role as steward of the land. Although much of the land is a forest of hardwoods and conifers, there is a significant amount of open land where the owner has waged a campaign to eradicate the bracken fern, which dominates every open area if left unchecked. As he explained, the bracken fern has no food value for deer or other animals and chokes out other useful plants. When the present owner purchased the land eleven years ago, most all open areas were covered with this fern. In fields where project would fail as the grass barely grew, but after several years of cutting fern,



Forest within the Otter's End Farm that fall under a forest management plan.



Otter's End Farm has some of the headwaters that feed the Pine River.

the prairie grass has become the dominate plant in some fields. Some years ago there was concern about the many dead white spruce trees that were on the property.

To remedy this situation, many of the white spruce were removed and replaced with prairie grass and seeding of oak, walnut and maple. The owner's hope is to add some diversity to the forest. In addition various types of fruit trees have

been planted throughout the Otter's End property. The primary function of over 100 planted fruit trees is to provide food for animals.

Intrigued by the possibility of growing chestnut trees, and with the help of a Forest Service consultant, 30 chestnut trees and seedlings were planted, each with its own fence ring, to discourage deer from browsing on the tiny trees. The trees which are a hybrid of American and Brazilian chestnuts are most suited to a warmer climate, but the owner hopes that that these transplanted seedlings will thrive. The blowdown, which dropped dozens of trees along the south part of the property several years ago, now is showing signs of rebirth as the broken timber has been removed and a forest of young maples has sprouted.



Otters End continued....



A major project has been the 2023 planting of 4200 red pine and the removal of stumps in an area that the previous owner had clear cut. Another project involved the removal of 40 acres of dead white spruce and the replanting of oak, walnut, and maple. Several food plots of turnips, rye, and crimson clover have been planted

in open areas to draw deer to feed. A field of soy beans planted up near the residence provides additional feed for deer. In recent years the owner has worked with the local Michigan State University Extension Office in a program of planting species that are considered endangered.

Each year two types of plants are introduced to the land. This year the owner planted elderberry near a wetland and several red osier dogwood. On our ride the owner pointed out some invasive autumn olive plants that are slated to be cut. Although they are working to contain this plant, it still keeps reappearing. Throughout the property are wetlands providing habitat for bear. This land is considered part of the bear corridor that the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy has worked to secure easements so bears are able to leave and find homes beyond the Mitchell Swamp which is used by many bruins for breeding. This land is obviously favored by local bears as I was showed a picture of five bear traveling together taken May 15 on a trail camera. Bears have put a damper on plans for bee hives. Two hives are maintained behind an electrified fenced area. Even with the protection, the bears usually manage once or twice a year to reach the hives. The owner is in the process of getting an additional 40 acres established as a conservation easement to go with the 360 acres already protected. On this new land, fifty fruit trees have been planted replacing a stand of dead white spruce in this area. What impressed me on this tour was the owner's dedication to improving his land to make it a more hospitable environment for the wild creatures that live there. The planting of prairie grass, and different types of trees have enriched and expanded the biodiversity of this property. This is a good example of what it means to be a steward of this land.

Earth Day 2025

On Sunday, April 27th CALC joined with other local groups at the Annual Cadillac Earth Day Celebration in the Cadillac City Park. The weather was perfect and the event was well attended. Many people stopped by the booth to make pine cone bird feeders and pressed flower book-marks. CALC even had a visit from Cabby Bear. Thank you to everyone who volunteered or stopped by to say hi.



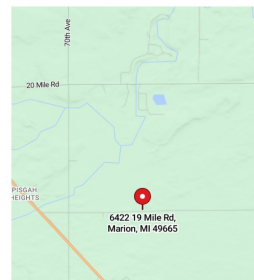
Guided Bird & Nature Walk with Cadillac Area Land Conservancy

Saturday, May 31, 2025

Conradson Property

9:30am - 11 (or later if there is interest)

6422 E 19 Mile Road, Marion



Take a guided walk with us and learn about the birds and natural features of the area. Enjoy the fresh morning air with CALC and birders Matt Johnstone and Bob Weir

- Walk begins at 9:45 am
- Dress for the weather and wear comfortable footwear
- Bring a water bottle, sunscreen, insect repellent and binoculars if you have them
- Recommended phone apps are iNaturalist and Merlin (botany and birding)

Event is free. To help us prepare for the event, please contact Sue at calc@calc-landtrust.org to RSVP.

A Celebration of Life

Reg Sprik

Saturday, June 14, 2025

2 - 4 pm

Kearney Township Hall, 4820 Aero Park Drive, Bellaire, Michigan

"every ripple a memory - every memory a blessing"



Director's Corner

Chris Gentry, Executive Director

CALC Stewardship

Through 28 conservation easement partnerships with private landowners, four nature preserves, and numerous community collaborations, the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy (CALC) protects 3,000 acres of land across our region—in perpetuity. And that number continues to grow each year.

Acquiring land and easement rights is only the beginning of permanent preservation. As Leslie Ratley-Beach of the Land Trust Alliance wisely notes, “The promise to take care of those acquisitions is the long game—that’s the promise of perpetuity. Stewardship provides that essential function.”

At CALC, our volunteers and staff are deeply committed to stewardship in a variety of meaningful ways:

- **Annual Monitoring:** Every conservation easement is monitored annually in partnership with landowners to ensure the unique values of each property remain aligned with its easement agreement.
- **Forest Management:** Landowners managing forested properties follow professionally developed forest management plans.

- **Sustainable Agriculture:** Farmland easement holders maintain crop rotation schedules and other sustainable practices to promote long-term soil health.
- **Preserve Care:** Volunteers contribute their time and expertise to help manage CALC-owned preserves—clearing trails, picking up litter, installing benches and wildlife boxes, removing invasive species, and more.
- **Land Management Planning:** CALC-owned preserves follow detailed land and forest management plans to support long-term ecological health.

Stewardship supports CALC’s core conservation priorities:

- Protecting vital watersheds
- Connecting public and private lands to support wildlife habitat and migration corridors
- Preserving family farms and woodlots
- Maintaining the scenic open spaces that define our region

True stewardship demands ongoing commitment and care—it is how we fulfill our promise of perpetuity.

I am deeply grateful for the passion, expertise, and dedication of every CALC volunteer, staff member, committee member, and board member. Your efforts make our land preservation mission possible. **Thank you!**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shari Spoelman, *Chair*
Marco Menezes, *Vice-chair*
Sam Hogg, *Secretary*
Dennis O’Hara, *Treasurer*
Marty Williams, *Vice Treasurer*
Pete Eliot
Cyndy Foley
Dave Foley
Mark Lagerwey
John Leech
Matt Long
Vicki Long

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chris Gentry

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Sue Conradson

Contact us at:

www.calc-landtrust.org
231) 775-3631
calc@calc-landtrust.org



In Celebration of 30 Years

Mark your calendar for **Sunday October 19th**. CALC will be celebrating our anniversary with music and food at the **Old Mill Venue** in Marion. The annual meeting will be from 2 to 3pm, followed by music, appetizers, and dessert from 3 to 6pm. Please come share memories and enjoy the music, food and fellowship. Event is free, however, to help us plan for the event, please RSVP to calc@calc-landtrust.org

CADILLAC AREA LAND CONSERVANCY SILENT ART AUCTION

This art reflects the mission of CALC to protect natural, scenic, and farm lands for current and future generations. CALC is thankful to our supporters who donated their beautiful art work for this auction to raise funds to support CALC.



Georgina - Shari Spoelman
58" X 15", Lake Superior driftwood,
painted with acrylics and sealed with a
semigloss medium



Vicky's Field - Steve Cunningham
Acrylic on Canvas. 24"x 48"
Sunrise over the farm



Big Cloud Day by Joyce Petrakovitz
Oil on canvas. 17.5" x 21.5"



Stone Ledge Lake Fish by Matt Long
Hand carved wood fish painted with acrylic

Bid in person at the CALC booth
Cadillac Festival of the Arts
July 18-19, 2025
Cadillac Commons
Auction ends 3pm July 19

Bid on-line through 5:00pm July 17



Auction items can be delivered to the winning bidders within the CALC service area. Delivery arrangements or pick-up outside of the CALC service area will have to be arranged by the winning bidder