



# Volunteer Steward Newsletter

Issue V, Spring 2003

a newsletter for Preserve Monitors  
and Trail Stewards of the  
Little Traverse Conservancy

North Point Natural Area/Todd Parker

## Volunteer Profile

### *Pat Wilson and donors Oliver & Edna Birge Birge Nature Preserve*

*It has become our tradition to annually profile one of our volunteer preserve monitors in this newsletter. This year, we asked Pat Wilson - monitor for the Birge Preserve in Mackinac County - for her thoughts about being a monitor. Pat's reply was that she would much rather talk about the preserve's donors: Oliver and Edna Birge. Thank you, Pat, for reminding us of the privilege of working with such special people through this business of protecting and caring for our lands.*

*(Oliver and Edna Birge donated the original 170-acre Birge Preserve to the Little Traverse Conservancy in 1992. In 1998 and 1999, the preserve expanded to 275 acres with two additions purchased with funds from the Les Cheneaux Foundation and funds raised through the Little Traverse Conservancy.)*

**What prompted you to become involved with the Little Traverse Conservancy as a volunteer preserve monitor?**

My love for the late Edna and Oliver Birge prompted my acting as volunteer. I had tremendous respect for them.

Oliver and Edna were truly remarkable people. Foster children came and went. Edna was a nurturer; Oliver the disciplinarian. Oliver and Edna, all of their lives, lived very frugally on what for many would be a very "low" income.



*Educational Outing at Birge*

However, their riches were friends and stewardship. They made their lives count in many ways. This preserve was just one.

The table of Edna and Oliver Birge



*Edna and Oliver Birge in 1992 with former director of land protection, Doug Robinson.*

became a major crossroad in the community. Rarely did you visit when there wasn't someone invited in for coffee and whatever their larder could share. No sooner would you sit when another appeared at the door. Soon Oliver would hold court while Edna supplied the food and warmth.

Oliver truly loved his land which he bought on the heels of the depression. He came to the Les Cheneaux region the first time as a babe in a basket. He and his brothers frolicked on the lumber schooners and dove off the spars. He sailed the bay as soon as he could hold a tiller. During the depression he and three friends lived off the land in the woods eating primarily the game they could harvest.

He did not inherit some of the original family property, which is closer to Hessel. When the preserve property came up for sale, he bought it. We believe that he paid about 500 dollars for it around 1935. This would be a fortune for Oliver. The property was considered really out of the way and not particularly desirable at the time. The bay, a back wash from an old lumber mill, was filled with pieces of discarded wood.

Over time, Oliver removed the wood, piece by piece, to burn for fuel. He dug his own basement BY HAND. For many years, his garden helped to feed his family on their meager income. He lived here with a goal to disturb the land the

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least he could.

Employment is not always easy here. He loved the area so much that he worked for many years in Indiana, commuting back and forth, but still living on his beloved land.

I used to walk with Oliver sometimes...we both liked to look for natural flora. I knew how important it was to him to have this land available to others in the future to enjoy just as we had. So although he could have sold it to make his life very comfortable and he feared losing it to taxes since he had a very restricted retirement income, he truly was delighted when the conservancy could make his taxes decrease and his ability to preserve the land for the future increase.

We became acquainted with the Birges because of a common interest in Crafts. Oliver and Edna used to allow us to rent one of their cabins (they had a few cabins that they rented to tourists). My husband Paul and Oliver had a very strong bond because of their common interest in boating and in particular sailing.

My contributions to conservation are very slight compared to Oliver and Edna. I count frogs, look for perch eggs, and walk the preserve to see that it's not abused. I try to pick up discarded trash when I can. I take folks on walks if asked and tire them with my explanations of what grows here or what goes there. My husband and I once interrupted breakfast to put out a small untended campfire on the preserve, but that's about it. No biggy - we just keep on enjoying Oliver and Edna's gift.



**Can you tell us a bit about your personal land ethic?**

Wild spaces are very important to me. I support the Little Traverse Conservancy because they preserve places for folks simply to walk or wade. A place where the frogs can sing, and the neighbor won't sue the owner over the noise. We need places set aside for all of us to share a sense of discovery. We need places where the natural ecology can continue relatively undisturbed. I say relatively because given the numbers of mankind and our impact, nothing is undisturbed. What I like - and what Oliver liked - is that his gift gives me hope that my grandchildren and great grandchildren can enjoy the land just as we have.

Believe me, as one who lives on the shore due to Oliver and Edna's generosity, I fully understand the pure joy and privilege of walking and wading and watching things grow on the preserve.

**What is one of the most interesting things that has happened to you as a preserve monitor (or that you have seen at the Birge Preserve)?**

Finding a tree stand neatly hidden in a group of three of the oldest poplars in the spring. Watching carp spawn wildly along the shore. Seeing the eagles standing on the beach. Sitting on the bench at Loon Lake and watching the sandhill cranes. Northern green orchids, fringed purple orchids, yellow lady slippers, fringed gentians, bottle gentians, spurred gentians, oodles of warblers, oven birds, Northern Shrike, the list goes on. My favorite, the golden beach (under water sometimes) when the horned bladderworts bloom...thinking of them as little two-faced ladies whose beauty hides the death umbrella that they tuck below the sand to slurp up little minute crustaceans.

## LTC Preserve Profile

March, 2003

Charlevoix County	33	1120.6
Cheboygan County	22	1033.3
Chippewa County	8	1169.4
Emmet County	66	2639.1
Mackinac County	13	945
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>6907.4</b>

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New trails and interpretive signs are planned for the 710-acre Round Island Point Preserve located in northern Chippewa County.

## New Trail Projects Planned for Summer of 2003

- North Branch Boyne River: bridge, trail clearing, parking area, interpretive sign.
- Raven Ridge: platform
- Oden Island: boardwalk, trail clearing and marking, parking area, interpretive sign.
- Round Island Point: platform, trail, interpretive signs
- Fochtman: platform w/associated trail or boardwalk
- McCune: replace old boardwalk

## Trail Steward Program

Little Traverse Conservancy is very pleased with the incredible response received for recruiting trail stewards! So far, seventeen volunteers signed up to help with 12 trails. The trail steward program began in the spring of 2002 in an effort to get assistance specifically with trail maintenance. As more trails are established on preserves, the need for help increases. We appreciate the interest and enthusiasm of our trail stewards, listed below (*county shown in parentheses*):

- Daniel Adams Family - McCune (Emmet)
- Phil Becker - Little Sand Bay (Beaver Island)
- Mike and Bonnie Brunett - Sleepy Hollow (Charlevoix)
- Nadine Cain - Birge (Mackinac)
- Gretchen Dorian - Chaboiganing, West (Cheboygan)
- Joel and Nancy Epstein - North Branch Boyne River (Charlevoix)
- Steve and Jane Horn - Raunecker (Emmet)
- Judy Harvey - Round Lake (Emmet)
- Kenyan and Sally Stebbins - Stutsmanville Bog (Emmet)
- Steve and Connie Vorencamp - Chaboiganing, East (Cheboygan)
- Jim Ward - Raven Ridge (Charlevoix)
- Brad and Van White - Ransom (Charlevoix)
- Mike Supernault - Andreae Preserve (Cheboygan)
- Chuck and Margy Murray - Seven Springs (Cheboygan)

### PROTECTED NATURAL AREA

Open to the Public  
for Recreational and  
Educational Purposes

Vehicles, ORVs,  
Camping, Removal of Plants,  
Dumping, and Fires Prohibited.

Hunting by Written Permission Only

For more information  
contact the  
Little Traverse  
Conservancy at  
231-347-0991.



## Other News & Information:

- New preserve signs will be installed on the following new and old preserves this summer: Fochtman, Susan Creek, Kinglet, Kreag, Bear Saw Creek, Wellman, Raunecker, Bessey Creek, Pigeon River Wildlife, Orchis Fen, Rocky Point, and Haggerty.
- The first edition of Little Traverse Conservancy's Preserve Monitor Guidelines publication has been sent to all volunteer preserve monitors. Basic information about preserve management and monitoring procedures is described in the Guidelines. Questions or comments are welcome.
- The first edition of the Conservancy's Trail Steward Guidelines was created in 2002 for volunteer trail stewards. It provides basic information about trails and maintenance activities.
- New rule signs (left) have been designed and will be placed beginning this summer.

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## Preserve Monitors

*We had a spectacular response to a request for additional preserve monitors in the Conservancy's Fall 2002 quarterly newsletter and are thrilled to have the following individuals join the preserve monitoring program (county shown in parentheses):*

- Gary Barfnecht - MacDonald, Watson, Gateway (Emmet)
- Nadine Cain - Sheppard-Hardy (Mackinac)
- Stan Dickinson - West Wequetonsing, Roaring Brook (Emmet)
- Judy Harvey - Round Lake (Emmet)
- Roger Heimbuch - Schachinger North, Schachinger South, Bartley, South Round Lake, Bearsaw Creek (Cheboygan)
- Steve and Jane Horn - Raunecker (Emmet)
- Rick and Lisa Loyd - Kalman (Emmet)
- Jeannine Palms and Dale Petty - Palms (Chippewa)
- David Stepanovich - Susan Creek and Kinglet (Charlevoix)
- Dave Treglown and Dean Pollard - Needle Point, Giaouque (Cheboygan)
- Mary Jane Ulrich - Seibert, Scollin-Lee (Charlevoix)
- Jim Ward - Raven Ridge (Charlevoix)
- John and Gene Ann Cansfield - Balsam Creek (Charlevoix)
- John Maximiuk - Kreag, Davis Family (Emmet)

*As always, we appreciate the time and dedication of our preserve monitors, several of whom have been monitoring a selected preserve for many years!*

Jim and Sue Adams, Joey Arbaugh, Robert and Debbie Arche Les Arnold, Mike and Bonnie Brunett, Craig Burke, Michael and Tammy Buttigieg, Joseph and Bridget Cadreau, John Campbell, Diane Conn, Dr. Allen and Jane Damschroder, Marilyn Damstra, Lorraine Edwards, Dick and Diane Elliot, Joel Evans, Sharon Gerlach, Bill Glass, George and Lois Graham, Lucy Hartlove, Ken Kelsey, Warren Krapohl, Barbara Kurtz, C.T. Martin, Marge May, Bill Mayhew, David McCauley, Harriet and Vaughn McGraw, Charles and Norma McKinley, Betty Menzi, Dr. John and Mrs. Noll, Jim and Ann Oleszek, Mark Paddock, Marlene Planck, Arch Reeves, Diane Rekowski, Barbara Rivard, John Rohe, Mr. Bernard Roy, Susan Rutledge, Stanley and Marilynn Smith, Scott Smith, Tom Stanley, Rufus Teesdale, Bernie Tillson, Dr. Edward Voss, Pat Wilson, Ron Winchester, Ken Winter.

***Keep your eyes out for notification of the volunteer thank you picnic this upcoming summer!***

## Preserve Profile: Colonial Point/Chaboiganing - Cheboygan County

(Colonial Point is owned by the U of M Biological Station; Chaboiganing is owned by LTC)

*Chaboiganing Preserve Monitor: Barbara Kurtz; Trail Stewards: Steve and Connie Vorencamp; Gretchen Dorian*



**Size:** Colonial Point - 290 acres  
Chaboiganing - 192 acres

**Characteristics:** Colonial Point includes 100-150 year old red oaks, the largest stand in the northern Lower Peninsula.

**Accessibility:** Over 2 1/2 miles of easy trails for hiking and cross country skiing.

**Directions:** Take US-31 north from Petoskey to Brutus Road. Parking lot for the Chaboiganing Preserve is across from the Burt Lake Market. Colonial Point Forest is located on the first road on the right past the market. The trailhead is 1/4 mile east on Indian Point Road.

**Don't forget that the updated preserve guide is now available. Call (231) 347-0991 for a copy.**