

2023

# THE CORPS RAPPOR

*Meridian Conservation Corps Annual Report*



## CONSERVING OUR CORNER OF THE WORLD

*A note from Meridian Township's Land Stewardship Coordinator, Emma Campbell*

This week marks 4 years that I have been with Meridian Township. As I was putting together this report, I was blown away and inspired by the incredible stewardship that has been poured into our natural communities. This work is not just about conservation, it is also about connection. If we could see all the invisible lines that tie us to everything in this life, it would look like a network resembling mycelium in the forest floor. Many ties are to the material world, as is demanded by society. But when we get out into a preserve on a sunny, misty morning, the only ties that matter are those that bring us closer to Earth. In those moments, we get excited about a mushroom popping up out of the ground, or a beautiful fleck of color coming from lichen on a tree. If this is all that the MCC achieves in a day, I am beyond happy. Luckily you all rock & we get so much work done! Thank you all so much for your hard work. You not only show up in terrible weather of all types, but also during life's trials & tribulations. You show up again & again for your human & natural community. It truly means so much to me, the flowers, and the bees.



### STEWARDSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

»»————««  
NEW PARTNERSHIPS

»»————««  
FAVORITE PHOTOS OF 2023



# STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

## 2023 Stewardship at a Glance

- 747.5 HOURS OF STEWARDSHIP COMPLETED IN THE TOWNSHIP
- 279 CORPS MEMBERS WITH 70 NEW SIGNUPS IN 2023
- 58 STEWARDSHIP WORKDAYS
- 16 EDUCATIONAL EVENTS
- 14 VERIFIED VERNAL POOLS
- 7 COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS & OPPORTUNITIES
- 3 SUCCESSFUL PRESCRIBED BURNS
- 1 NEW PARCEL ADDED TO THE LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM
- A NEW TEAM MEMBER: STEWARDSHIP FIELD ASSISTANT, SAM TRAUGER



# INVASIVE SPECIES STRIKE TEAM



*Cut, dab, and restore!*

- **24 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO INVASIVE REMOVAL**
- **19 DIFFERENT SPECIES REMOVED AND MANAGED**
- **8 HERBACEOUS INVASIVES:**
  - Dame's rocket, garlic mustard, Japanese hedge parsley, Japanese Knotweed, phragmites, reed canary grass, lesser celandine & sweet clover
  - Over 2,500 pounds bagged!
- **11 WOODY INVASIVES:**
  - oriental bittersweet, honeysuckle (4 species), autumn olive, common & glossy buckthorn, multiflora rose, Japanese barberry & European privet
- **11 PRESERVES & 9 PARKS MANAGED FOR INVASIVE SPECIES**
- **TWO NEW SPECIES IDENTIFIED FOR MANAGEMENT (NEW IN THE TOWNSHIP)**

(BELOW) FIGHTING OFF SKEETERS WHILE PULLING JAPANESE HEDGE PARSLEY



(BELOW) USING THE CHAINSAW FOR BIG AUTUMN OLIVES IS ALWAYS FUN!



(BELOW) SNOW DOESN'T SCARE THE MCC AWAY WHEN INVASIVE BITTERSWEET THREATENS OUR FORESTS



# PLANTING A NATIVE MERIDIAN

*Collect, sort & plant!*



- **12 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO NATIVE SEED SOWING & PLANTING**
- **Transplants & seeds are lovingly collected by MCC volunteers & staff from remnant populations in our parks & preserves**
  - Keeping the genetic diversity as local as possible means the highest benefit for pollinators
- **41 DIFFERENT NATIVE SPECIES SOWN & TRANSPLANTED**
- **730 NATIVE SPECIES TRANSPLANTED:**
  - A mix of early goldenrod, showy goldenrod, smooth aster, butterfly weed, Robin's plantain, golden alexander & American plum
- **AN ESTIMATED 588,298 NATIVE SEEDS SOWN**
- **8 PARKS AND PRESERVES RECIEVED NATIVE SPECIES**

(BELOW) VOLUNTEERS PLANTING IN AN OPENING AT LAKE LANSING NORTH



(BELOW) SHOWY & EARLY GOLDENROD PLANTINGS FROM SPRING THRIVE AT DAVIS FOSTER PRESERVE



(BELOW) BEAUTIFUL HORSE GENTIAN SEEDS RIGHT BEFORE THEY WENT IN THE GROUND AT SOWER WOODS PRESERVE



# PLANTING A NATIVE MERIDIAN

Collect, sort & plant!



- 8 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO NATIVE SEED SCOUTING & COLLECTION
- 3 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO SEED PROCESSING
- 52 DIFFERNT NATIVE SPECIES COLLECTED FROM PARKS & PRESERVES
- OVER 600,000 SEEDS PROCESSED BY VOLUNTEERS & STAFF
- RARE SPECIES COLLECTED:
  - Blue-eyed grass, horse gentian, Michigan lily (below), poke milkweed, white turtlehead & Robin’s plantain

(BELOW) COLLECTING NATIVE SEEDS FROM A WETLAND AT NANCY MOORE PARK



(BELOW) SCOUTING FOR SEEDS IN AUGUST AT DAVIS FOSTER PRESERVE



(BELOW) DO OUR SEEDS JUST WAKE UP LOOKING GREAT? NO, OUR VOLUNTEERS WORK HARD TO PROCESS THEM FOR EASIER SEEDING!



# WEEKDAY WARRIORS & CLEAN UP CREW

*Digging trash out of wetlands is what we do!*



- 11 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO REMOVING TRASH FROM PRESERVES, PARKS AND ROADWAYS
- AN ESTIMATED 3,500 POUNDS OF TRASH REMOVED
- 21 TIRES, 15 HUB CAPS, PLASTIC LITTER, TAKE OUT WASTE, & CARDBOARD BOXES
  - Favorite piece of trash found: a microphone
- WEEKDAY WARRIORS ARE DEDICATED TO MORE THAN JUST TRASH CLEANUP
  - They work on small stewardship projects, like invasive removal in sensitive areas, native seed collection & sowing
- WEEKDAY FAME! WILX NEWS 10 COVERED OUR SMALL BUT MIGHTY GROUP THIS PAST FALL



(LEFT) AN EXAMPLE OF THE VARIETY OF TRASH OUR CREW FINDS! ANYONE NEED A HAT?

(BELOW) VOLUNTEERS HAVE FUN PICKING TRASH OUT OF NANCY MOORE WETLAND



(BELOW) HUBCAPS AND TIRES ARE COMMON TO FIND ALONG THE ROADWAY



(BELOW) OUR VOLUNTEERS KEEP CENTRAL PARK DRIVE CLEAN ALL YEAR ROUND!



# VERNAL POOL PATROL

*A citizen science program working to protect our smallest wetlands!*

- **Volunteers go through training & monitor vernal pools 3 times a year to gather vital data that helps protect these valuable wetlands**
- **Species like fairy shrimp & blue-spotted salamanders (right) depend on these temporary pools for their life cycles**
- **14 VERIFIED VERNAL POOLS IN THE TOWNSHIP**
  - **Thank you to MCC volunteers, Bertha Bullen, Bruce Peffers, Susan Andrews, & David Howe for contributing data!**
- **THERE ARE OVER 140 UNVERIFIED POOLS IN THE TOWNSHIP**
  - **Want to help out? Visit the MI Vernal Pools Partnership at [mivernalpools.com](http://mivernalpools.com) to find out more, or stay tuned for more information in March!**

**(BELOW) FAIRY SHRIMP ARE SERENE LITTLE CRUSTACEANS THAT PROVIDE A GREAT FOOD SOURCE FOR BREEDING AMPHIBIANS**



**(BELOW) VOLUNTEERS WERE CAPTIVATED BY THEIR FIRST VIEW OF FAIRY SHRIMP**



**(BELOW) LOOK CLOSELY TO SEE THE MAGICAL COLORING OF THIS BLUE-SPOTTED SALAMANDER**



**(LEFT) A VERNAL POOL IN NANCY MOORE PARK IS BEING USED BY A RESIDENT BEAVER. VERNAL POOLS PROVIDE HABITAT FOR A DIVERSE ARRAY OF WILDLIFE, INSECTS, & PLANTS.**



# PRESCRIBED BURN PROGRAM

*Restoring native ecosystems with fire!*



(BELOW) LAKE LANSING NORTH PRESERVE HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY BURNED SINCE 2012. FOUND HERE ARE SOME OF THE TOWNSHIP'S RAREST PLANTS, WITH LITTLE INVASIVES PRESENT.



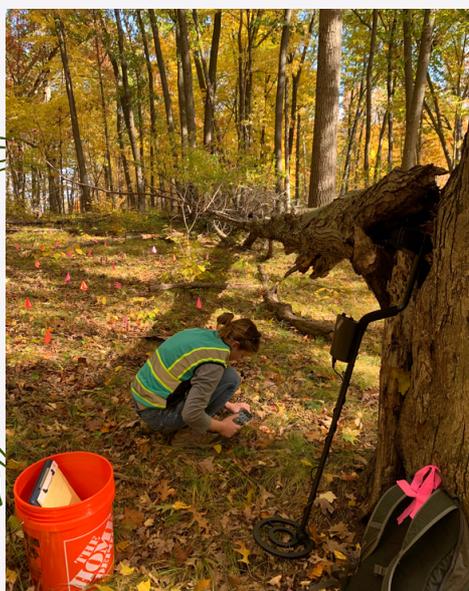
(BELOW) A SPRING BURN OF THIS 4 ACRE WETLAND AT DAVIS FOSTER HELPED MANAGE INVASIVE PHRAGMITES



(BELOW) MSU FORESTRY STUDENTS GOT THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME AT THE LAKE LANSING NORTH PREScribed BURN THIS PAST FALL



- 36.2 ACRES WAS SUCCESSFULLY BURNED THIS YEAR
- RED CEDAR GLEN PRESERVE RECEIVED ITS FIRST BURN IN DECADES
  - We hope this will continue to revitalize native woodland flowers & keep invasive species in check
- PRESERVES THAT ARE CONSISTENTLY BURNED SHOW THE MOST PLANT DIVERSITY
- DAVID BORNEMAN LLC, WELCOMED MSU FORESTRY STUDENTS TO GAIN INVALUABLE FIELD EXPERIENCE (RIGHT)
- Staff will perform annual floristic surveys starting next year to gather data on the benefits of controlled burns on native plant diversity



(LEFT) STAFF BEGAN PRELIMINARY FLORISTIC SURVEYS AT LAKE LANSING NORTH THIS PAST FALL. PLOT BOUNDARIES ARE FOUND USING A METAL DETECTOR & REBAR POSTS.

# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



*We can't have hard work without a little fun!*

- 9 TRAILSIDE ECOLOGY WALKS
- 4 WETLAND WALKS
- 1 FANTASTIC FUNGI HIKE WITH ANTHONY RECCA
- These educational hikes are not just about learning new plants, insects, wildlife & fungi. They are meant to spur natural curiosity & relax your mind with the sights, sounds and smells of the outdoors. Nature is neat & very good for our mental health!

**(BELOW) EVEN THE RAIN COULDN'T KEEP FOLKS FROM GETTING EXCITED ABOUT FANTASTIC FUNGI! NATURE IS ALWAYS FULL OF SURPRISES**



**(BELOW) WILD BLUE IRIS FILLS OUR WETLANDS & HEARTS IN EARLY SUMMER. THIS FLOWER AT SUMBAL PRESERVE WAS ONE OF MANY.**



**(BELOW) THE WETLAND WALK AT SUMBAL PRESERVE WAS MAGICAL! MOST FOLKS HAD NEVER EVEN HEARD OF THIS HIDDEN GEM.**



**(ABOVE) THE WETLAND WALK AT FOSTER CROUSE PRESERVE PROVIDED EXCEPTIONAL VIEWS! (RIGHT) WHEN WE LOOK CLOSER, WE GET A PEEK INSIDE SMALLER WORLDS, LIKE THE ONE OF THIS BRILLIANT TIGER BEETLE.**



# NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Connect, Learn, and Conserve!!



## • MICHIGAN WATERWAYS STEWARDS

- Working with Delta Sigma Phi, Delta Kappa Epsilon, & East Lansing, MI Waterways Stewards brought the community together for a Red Cedar River Cleanup!
- This group has removed hundreds of electric scooters & more from the Red Cedar!



## • HASLETT SOCCER CLUB

- These kids brought the energy & removed a ton of invasive honeysuckle at Davis Foster preserve

## • CHIPPEWA MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Every year 6th-8th grade students help remove invasive species & pick up trash at Hartrick Park!



## • MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

- Fisheries & Wildlife Club students initiated a seed exchange to help restore their prairie on campus
- Forestry students participated in prescribed burns, seed collection, & invasive removal
- Department of Fisheries & Wildlife Deer Targeted Anti-Tick Project launched this year
  - This project will provide important data on our white-tailed deer & tick population in Meridian



(BELOW) MAGNET FISHERS PULLED A HEAPING PILE OF RUBBISH OUT OF THE RED CEDAR RIVER



(BELOW) CHIPPEWA MIDDLE SCHOOLERS GET OUTSIDE TO LEARN & HAVE FUN USING THE TOOLS TO CONQUER INVASIVE SPECIES!



(BELOW) THE RED CEDAR RIVER IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR WATERSHED & NEEDS OUR CARE & SUPPORT.



# STAFF BEHIND THE SCENES

*Our Stewardship Team is small, but mighty! Here are some of our favorite moments from the field!*



(RIGHT) DON'T PICK UP SNAPPING TURTLES UNLESS YOU HAVE EXPERIENCE!  
(LEFT) HAULING HEAVY TRASH OUT OF A REMOTE WETLAND ON A HUMID DAY. WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE?

(BELOW) WE LOVE GETTING THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE TURTLES FROM THE ROADWAY. LOOK AT THAT SNAPPER SMILE!



(BELOW) VOLUNTEERING FOR A WEEK TO SURVEY EASTERN MASSASAUGA RATTLESNAKES UP NORTH WAS A BLAST!



(LEFT) WE DON'T JUST DO STEWARDSHIP, WE ALSO DRESS UP FOR COMMUNITY EVENTS, LIKE SANTA'S WOODLAND STROLL.



(BELOW) A FIELD DAY FOR THE BOOKS! WE GOT STUCK IN MUCK, RIPPED OUR PANTS, AND FOUND MANY DELICIOUS BLACKBERRIES



(LEFT) PICKING UP HERBICIDE APPLICATION SIGNAGE AFTER LESSER CELANDINE TREATMENTS AT TED BLACK WOODS. WE SAW A BARRED OWL AND A RED FOX!



# FAVORITE PHOTOS OF 2023

