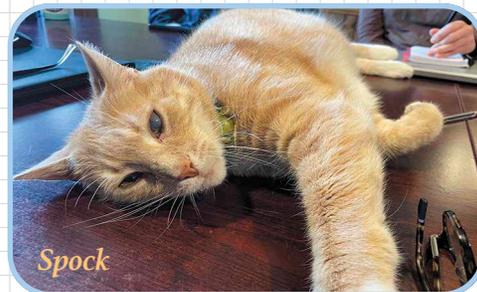


What Do TLC Staff Do in Winter?

January is here. Nature is quiet—it's cold out, and snow is on the ground. That must mean it's time for TLC staff to go back to the office, take off their work boots and cuddle up with office cat Spock, right?

Nope! While Spock does get his share of attention, work at TLC continues year-round, both indoors and outdoors.



Restoration Staff

—Daniel, David and Kevin



The restoration team says the winter months are actually a great time for brush clearing, mowing and woody work. With no leaves and less plant growth to contend with, it's easier to find and remove the invasive trees and shrubs that are interfering with the growth of native ones. And having a toasty bonfire is a plus on a cold day!

The restoration team will also be working on processing (drying, cleaning and sorting) the many types of native seed that were collected from TLC sites in the fall.

Did you know that winter is a good time to spread native seed? Spreading seed after a snowfall helps the seeds be absorbed by the ground, and the cold temperatures will prevent the seed from germinating before spring.

Other winter tasks include interviewing candidates for the summer internship program and checking sites for worn or missing conservation boundary signs.

When the weather is really bad, they use the time to get caught up on organizing tools and repairing equipment.

Conservation@Home

—Sarah and Carol

Just because it's winter, doesn't mean you can't schedule a **Conservation@Home** site visit! Sarah and Carol are available year-round to help you transform your yard to a beautiful, native landscape that supports wildlife, helps rain soak into the soil, and provides natural beauty.

The **Conservation@Home** team also has presentations and several webinars scheduled throughout the winter. You can see what's coming up on pages 5-6 of this newsletter.



Farm Program—Claire

For Claire, winter is all about the planning. She is working on an upcoming agriculture-related film screening, as well as planning events for the year to come. This includes planning the Women's Learning Circles that will take place in 2026. Learning Circles link women farmland owners and the resources needed to achieve their conservation goals. You can read her recap of the 2025 Learning Circles on page 3.

Food Forest—Gretchen

While TLC's Community Food Forest rests for the winter, Gretchen is busy planning its next stages. This includes ordering seeds, winter seed sowing and starting seeds for spring planting. And, of course, there are tasks like organizing the Food Forest shed for the year to come, writing grants to help fund the program and planning events to get the community involved.

Enjoy the winter months—we hope to see you at an upcoming volunteer workday, on a winter webinar or at an upcoming event!





News and Notes

from our Executive Director, *Lisa Haderlein*

As I write this note, I'm looking out at a foot of snow covering the branches of the ancient oak in front of TLC's office on Dean Street. The snow-covered branches twist this way and that—as bur oak branches do—and the sunlight and shadows create some beautiful patterns.

As you read this, the days are starting to get longer, and by the middle of February, the cardinals should be back—a sure sign that spring is on its way!

I hope you had a lovely holiday season, and that you are finding ways to enjoy this winter—snowshoeing, curled up by the fireplace, hiking at a local natural area, or maybe just watching the juncos hop around eating seed under your birdfeeder!

TLC has lots of programs coming up for you to enjoy—I hope we run into each other at one! Thank you for all you do for conservation!

Lisa



Welcome New Members!

Judy Eames | Harvard

Phillip & Effie Elliott | Crystal Lake

Jerald & Karen Ewert | Prairie Grove

Adrian Gaerlan | Marengo

David & Korinne Garelli | Crystal Lake

Christian & Susan Heaney | Johnsborg

Bob Kapheim | Pingree Grove

Luke Keefe | Marengo

Olivia Alex Una & Sihun Kim
| Crystal Lake

Daniel & Kathleen Korshak
| Johnsborg

Melissa Kriescher | Woodstock

Cort & Maria Lawton | Crystal Lake

Elyse Leannais | McHenry

Evan Lewis | Woodstock

John & Kimberly Lucas | Crystal Lake

Twyla Martins | Lexington, KY

Connie Myjak | Bull Valley

Michael Nosbaum | Woodstock

Jennifer Oliver | Crystal Lake

Simon Politzer | Fox River Grove

Lisa Rhoades | Woodstock

Mary Schlichting | Crystal Lake

Kenneth & Dana Strote | Johnsborg

William Thomson | Woodstock

Thomas & Diane Timm | Crystal Lake

Brendan Walsh & Elisabeth Kasnicka
| Mundelein

Andrew Williams & Rebecca Christoffel
| Madison, WI

Are You a Member?

Scan this QR code with your phone to become a member of TLC or renew your membership today. Thank you for preserving land for life in McHenry County!



A QUICK, SIMPLE TIP TO MAKE YOUR HOME MORE ECO-FRIENDLY: —BIRD SAFE WINDOWS—

Karen Lavin, TLC Board Member
lawdog57@hotmail.com



You may have heard that Chicago's skyscrapers cause the death of millions of migrating birds each year. In fact, nationwide we lose over a billion birds a year from glass strikes. This is because windows often reflect the outside—trees, the sky, etc. They fly into windows thinking it's open space.

Birds are often just stunned and fall to the ground. If you witness this, wildlife rescues suggest putting the injured bird in a small box with airholes and placing it in a quiet, dark place. Often, they will fly away safely the next morning.

Outdoor lights add to the problem because they attract birds to our homes. Eighty percent of birds migrate between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m., so turn off outdoor lights by 10:00 p.m. daily if you can.

It's especially important to protect birds near birdbaths and feeders. You can buy film and decals to place on the outside of your windows to alert birds. Be sure to install the film on the outside of the windows (it doesn't work on the inside). Aftermarket films and decals may be visible indoors, but only minimally, so it doesn't interfere with your view.

If you are building or replacing windows in your home or office, you can buy windows that have safety film built in and are transparent from the inside.

You might assume that most bird strikes happen around skyscrapers. Not so, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Most of the billions bird deaths a year are in buildings under four stories tall, so make a difference and protect the birds!

The Land Conservancy of McHenry County

P.O. Box 352, Woodstock, IL 60098
815-337-9502

ConserveMC.org

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LEARNING CIRCLES

Women Farmers and Farmland Owners Share and Look Ahead

In 2025, TLC's farm program hosted a record six Learning Circles for Women Farmers and Farmland Owners. The Learning Circles highlight the knowledge, resilience and leadership of women working the land. They offer space to connect, share experiences, and learn from one another. We continually hear how attendees—102 of them last year—value these spaces to feel seen and inspired by other women land stewards.

We hosted two spring Learning Circles in collaboration with American Farmland Trust that focused on farmland succession planning and soil health. Throughout the growing season, we collaborated with farm(h)ers in McHenry County, visiting Teshuva Fields and neighboring Tsedah Farms in Crystal Lake, Adama Farm in Marengo, and The Blue Farm in Harvard.

We closed out the season by joining with The Land Connection, IDEA Farm Network, and Michael Fields Agricultural Institute to host a Learning Circle in October at Wild Trillium Farm at Natural Farm Stand in Richmond.

The women offer encouragement, like “stop worrying about the ideal” and “don’t get stuck in the paralysis of decision making”. They offer insight into farming, recognizing that “farming is a continuum, and next year is another chance,” and “although it can be consuming, try to slow down and enjoy it”.

They also offer basic self-resiliency tools that are easily forgotten in the bustle of the season, like “feed yourself, too” and “it’s not a sin to be tired.”



Women learned about small farm equipment at the August 2025 Learning Circle at Adama Farm.

Beyond personal skills, attendees built on their farming practices and skillsets by:

- Asking attendees to bring in soil samples and conducting slake tests to evaluate their soil health
- Demonstrating tools and equipment for special uses
- Learning about high tunnels and how to cost-share them
- Seeing examples of ways to scale-up a farm in terms of employees or infrastructure
- Foraging for edible perennials and discussing options for diversifying income streams

The theme of land stewardship runs through all of the Learning Circles. This includes practices that prove that “ecological can also be productive”. Many are looking toward nature and wondering how they can best mimic it.

Brenna Ness from the McHenry County Conservation District shared their

expanded grazing program, which marries conservation and agriculture. The women also provided specific examples of soil health practices on their farms, and some admit that they’re still trying to convince their tenant or father to finally plant cover crops.

The women are a mosaic of first-generation farmers. Many have left corporate jobs. Some consider themselves “late bloomers”, “farmer’s daughters”, or folks who remember that “grandma used to be able to walk outside with a bowl and come back with a salad”. Many want to learn skills of self-sufficiency and the trades.

With 2026 being the Year of the Woman Farmer, we can’t wait to highlight more stories and celebrate the contributions to the community and our landscape. TLC’s farm program is working on an engaging lineup of festivities throughout the year. Stay tuned for more details about those activities and 2026 Learning Circles, with updates on our website: ConserveMC.org/women-farmland-owners. ♦

PARTICIPATE TO CREATE A WARM COMMUNITY WELCOME

Will you help Bull Valley Garden Club (BVGC) plant a tree? Together, we can welcome a new family to our community.

The Bull Valley Garden Club wishes to create a warm community welcome for the family who will own the newly constructed Habitat for Humanity home at 1300 Tappan in Woodstock. The garden club hopes to establish the front flower bed for the homeowners along with a flowering tree in the front yard.

The BVGC wishes to raise funds for the purchase of the front yard tree, the front flower bed, and if possible, the foundation plantings for the backyard. The new homeowners will take ownership in the spring 2026, and the planting will take place at that time.

Please consider contributing any amount. Please scan the attached QR Code or send a check to BVGC at 1309 Woodland Lane, Woodstock, IL 60098. You will be listed as a donor on the welcome card for the new owners. A receipt will be provided upon request.

Send Money with Zelle®



Bull Valley Garden Club
(***-***-8296)



Bull Valley Garden Club members Maggie Bailey, Shirlee Ambroziak and Barbara Marrs preparing to design the bed plantings at the Habitat house.

Do You Know a Nature-loving Student?

The CLIP summer internship application period opens Jan. 15

Are you, or do you know, a high school/college-aged individual with a love and passion for the natural world? Is that person interested in gaining the skills required to become a conservation professional and learning about the natural wonders of Northern Illinois? If so, they should consider applying to join TLC's Conservation Leader Internship Program (CLIP) for the 2026 season!

CLIP is a full-time, paid summer internship that provides underserved communities such as women and BIPOC students/youth with hands-on professional training in the field of conservation. Participants will gain experience areas such as:

- ◆ plant identification
- ◆ land management
- ◆ GIS/GPS training
- ◆ prescribed fire training
- ◆ herbicide use
- ◆ rare plant monitoring
- ◆ wildlife/stream surveys
- ◆ sustainable farming techniques
- ◆ land preservation techniques
- ◆ field safety
- ◆ scientific research/experimental design
- ◆ art in the natural world
- ◆ career development and professional networking.

These skills will give each participant a strong understanding of the field of conservation and serve as a springboard for a professional career in the field. No experience is required.

The application period for CLIP 2026 opens Jan. 15 and closes Feb. 15, 2026.

To apply, visit ConserveMC.org/CLIP. Questions can be sent to Daniel at dpohl@conserveinc.org.



Students have the opportunity to get hands-on training in conservation through TLC's CLIP internship program.



SPECIAL EVENT



Stirring from Winter Slumber Guided Forest Walk

Take a slow wander through Wolf Oak Woods to witness Earth begin to awaken. Join ANFT-certified forest therapy guide, Cathy McCauley, in marking the halfway point between winter and spring on this two-hour guided forest walk. As Earth begins to feel the first stirrings of the coming spring, this time of year is rich with opportunity for personal reflection. Through a series of expansive invitations, you'll be guided to notice your senses and what comes alive in you as you pause to connect with the land and yourself. You will be offered opportunities to share what you are noticing. The walk will be about a mile and will conclude with a short celebration of light snacks and tea brewed from native plants harvested locally.

Date/Time: Sunday, Feb 1, 2–4:15 p.m.

Location: Wolf Oak Woods, 9016 IL Route 120, Bull Valley

Fee: \$30 per person (max 10 people). Please register through Cathy's website, Birdsong Nature Co. Visit www.birdsongnatureco.com/events and select the event "Stirring from Slumber," or email info@birdsongnatureco.com. A portion of the proceeds from this walk will be donated to TLC.





WEBINARS

Make a difference in 2026 by planting new native plants in your yard! Need some ideas? Check out these free webinars with TLC's **Conservation@Home** team. Watch the recordings anytime. Or schedule a **Conservation@Home** site consultation, and we'll give you custom ideas for your yard! (Yes, even in the winter!) Visit [ConserveMC.org](https://www.conserveMC.org) for more information.



Native Plants for Sunny Gardens

It's winter, so let's dream about our native sun-loving prairie plants and how they can add beauty and function in our gardens! We will share layering techniques and favorite plant combinations for gardens big and small.

Date/Time: Wednesday, Feb. 11, 12–1:00 p.m.

Fee: Free, please register at [ConserveMC.org](https://www.conserveMC.org) by Feb. 9 at 12:00 p.m.



Native Plants for Shade Gardens

Shade gardens can be filled with a beautiful diversity of native plants, from wildflowers to sedges and ferns. Join us for creative ideas on enhancing those shady areas of your yard while supporting pollinators and suppressing weed growth!

Date/Time: Wednesday, Feb. 18, 12–1:00 p.m.

Fee: Free, please register at [ConserveMC.org](https://www.conserveMC.org) by Feb. 16 at 12:00 p.m.

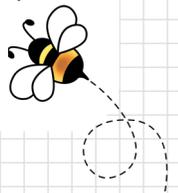


Native Landscapes to Support Native Bumblebees

Buzz into spring by discovering how to create native landscapes that support our bumblebees! Learn how to identify common species and help keep their populations thriving.

Date/Time: Wednesday, Feb 25, 1–2:00 p.m.

Fee: Free, please register at [ConserveMC.org](https://www.conserveMC.org) by Feb. 23 at 12:00 p.m.



Watch for online ordering to open in March or April for TLC's native plant sale! Become a member at [ConserveMC.org](https://www.conserveMC.org) for access one day early for the best selection of this year's offerings.

SPECIAL EVENT

Native Landscaping for Winter Beauty

Sarah Michehl of The Land Conservancy of McHenry County will give winter landscaping tips that show off the beauty of our native grasses, wildflowers and shrubs. She will also share the connection between wildlife and these particular plants.

Date/Time: Wednesday, Jan. 14, 7–8:00 p.m.

Location: Cary Area Public Library, 1606 Three Oaks Rd., Cary, IL.

Fee: Free, please register at [CaryAreaLibrary.org](https://www.CaryAreaLibrary.org)



SPECIAL EVENTS

Winter Night's Family Fun

Enjoy a wintery night in the woods complete with bonfires, night hikes, and a sheltered area with hot cocoa. Bring the whole family out to experience the magic of a Woodstock winter evening. Dress to be outside and walking on trails in the winter! Please register so we can contact you in case of cancellation due to inclement weather.

Date/Time: Friday, Jan. 9, 6–8:00 p.m.

Location: Hennen Conservation Area, 4622 Dean St., Woodstock

Fee: Free, please register at ConserveMC.org



Get outside this winter at a fun, family event in Woodstock.

SAVE the DATE

for TLC's
**35TH Annual
Celebration!**

SUNDAY
APRIL | 12 | 2026

The Reserve at Black Oak
Harvard, IL

Winter Tree and Shrub Identification

No leaves? No problem! Join TLC's restoration ecologists to learn how to identify trees and shrubs based on their twigs and bark. This class will be entirely outdoors, so please wear clothes and boots appropriate for the weather and be prepared for uneven trail conditions.

Date/Time: Thursday, Jan. 15, 2–4:00 p.m.

Location: Ryders Woods, 751 E. Kimball Ave., Woodstock

Fee: \$5, please register at ConserveMC.org



Learn how to identify trees and shrubs in winter in this outdoor class.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Event dates and times are subject to change. If you are new to TLC workdays or it's been a while, please be sure to fill out a volunteer form online at www.conservemc.org/volunteer before you attend so you can receive updates or cancellations.

Jan. 3: Irish Oaks Nature Preserve Restoration Workday, 19019 Lincoln Rd., Harvard.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Jan. 5: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday, 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Jan. 7: Crowley Oaks restoration workday, 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Jan. 9: Winter Night's Family Fun
Hennen Conservation Area, 4622 Dean St., Woodstock
Free, please register at ConserveMC.org
6–8:00 p.m.

Jan. 10: Boloria Meadows restoration workday, 7219 Millburne Ct., Bull Valley.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Jan. 14: Native Landscaping for Winter Beauty
Cary Library, 1606 Three Oaks Rd. Cary.
Free, please register at CaryAreaLibrary.org
7–8:00 p.m.

Jan. 15: Winter Tree and Shrub Identification
Ryder's Woods, 751 E. Kimball Ave., Woodstock.
\$5 per person, please register at ConserveMC.org
2–4:00 p.m.

Jan. 19: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday, 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Jan. 21: Crowley Oaks restoration workday, 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Jan. 22: How to Care for Your Oak Woods Webinar
Please register at ConserveMC.org
12–1:00 p.m.

Jan. 29: Plan Your Native Plant Garden Webinar
Free, please register at ConserveMC.org
2–1:00 p.m.

Feb. 1: Stirring from Winter Slumber Guided Forest Walk
with Cathy McCauley
Wolf Oak Woods, 9016 IL Route 120, Woodstock.
\$30/person, register at Birdsongnatureco.com/events
2–4:15 p.m.

Feb. 2: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday, 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Feb. 4: Crowley Oaks restoration workday, 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Feb. 7: Irish Oaks Nature Preserve Restoration Workday, 19019 Lincoln Rd., Harvard.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Feb. 11: Native Plants for Sunny Gardens Webinar
Free, please register at ConserveMC.org
12–1:00 p.m.

Feb. 14: Boloria Meadows restoration workday, 7219 Millburne Ct., Bull Valley.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Feb. 16: Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday, 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Feb. 18: Crowley Oaks restoration workday, 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Feb. 18: Native Plants for Shade Gardens Webinar
Free, please register at ConserveMC.org
12–1:00 p.m.

Feb. 25: Native Landscapes to Support Native Bumblebees Webinar
Free, please register at ConserveMC.org
12–1:00 p.m.

815•337•9502

The Land Conservancy of McHenry County

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