

# EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION

One of the reasons we work so hard to conserve land in this area is to protect and restore habitat for all the creatures that call this corner of Southwest Michigan home—particularly ones that are threatened.

One such critter is the massasauga rattlesnake, the only venomous snake found in Michigan. This notoriously timid snake is currently listed by the state as a “species of special concern”—Michigan is its last stronghold. It is also a candidate for a federal listing as “threatened”.

There were reports that massasauga were present on one of the preserves we own, but we wanted to collect scientific data on whether a population was indeed present. Andrews University was interested too, so we partnered with a professor and students in the biology department to do a field study in the spring and summer of 2015. The data collected could help us secure

funding for restoration activities and to acquire neighboring land for preservation, particularly if the US Fish & Wildlife Service categorizes the snake as “threatened”.



In early May, an adult male massasauga, whom we have named Marvin (pictured above), did in fact make his way into one of our traps. Marvin’s existence means that there were at least two other massasaugas present here at the same time (to conceive Marvin). This tells us that there is at least a small population present on the preserve. We plan to continue and expand the study in 2016 to include a population study and habitat analysis, which will help guide our management of the preserve.

This is the first scientific field study we have conducted in partnership with a research University, and a great example of how we have been able to deepen our expertise and grow our partnerships.



*Dr. Daniel Gonzalez, Assistant Professor of Biology at Andrews University*

## Your support makes wonderful things possible!



In 2015, we did an inventory of plants and trees found in our new 34-acre Flynn Woods Preserve. We found 340 different species... an incredible amount of biodiversity!



We have a group of dedicated volunteers that help us manage our 10 nature preserves. In 2015, these folks put in 560 hours to create trails, remove invasive plants, and inventory plant and animals present in our preserves.

37 threatened or endangered plants and 9 threatened or endangered animals make their homes in the protected habitats found in our 10 nature preserves.



With the acquisition of Jens Jenson Preserve and the Tower Hill Camp conservation easement, we have protected 8,100 trees near the lakeshore in Sawyer.



14 new species of native prairie flowers and plants came up at Burns Prairie Preserve in 2015. Just two years prior, this 12-acre tract of land was an agricultural field gone fallow.

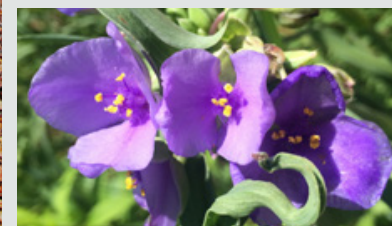
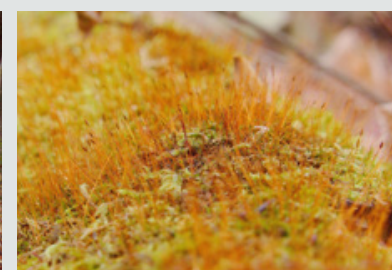
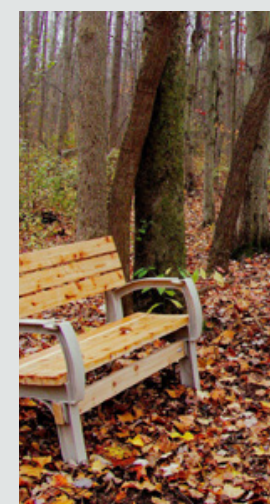


2015 marked 15 years since Chikaming Open Lands began protecting open space.

Over the duration of those 15 years, we’ve been able to protect more than 1,605 acres of wetland, prairie, farmland, and woodland; more than 200 acres of which is land that can never be developed located near the lakeshore.



All of it is possible because of you—members of the Chikaming Open Lands family that is now more than 500 households strong!



Chikaming Open Lands

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Some of those neighbors came to Chikaming Open Lands with an idea. What if we could bring the surrounding community together in a grassroots effort to protect that property in its natural state?

But while Chikaming Open Lands owns and manages this preserve, it's not just ours. It's yours. Jens Jensen is open to the public for hiking, birdwatching, cross country skiing, or simply stopping to enjoy the sights, sounds and restorative tranquility of nature—a wonderful open space, preserved forever, by the community, for the community!

the Barnes Club  
 granor Farm  
 greenbush Brewing Company  
 grad Hinsley  
 he John G. Shedd Aquarium  
 local  
 Mesa Luna  
 Kevin Mize  
 ew Buffalo Sailing  
 Excursions  
 ed Arrow Roadhouse  
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 Sawyer Garden Center  
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