Thawing and Thriving in the Keweenaw

Keweenaw LAND TRUST

A community partner protecting land, water, and quality of life through conservation, stewardship, and nature connections

Newsletter
April, 2024



We all know this has been a strange winter for the Keweenaw. The CopperDog 150 was cancelled for lack of snow, then the Great Bear Chase—followed by snowstorms in April.

In mid-February, while training for the Great Bear Chase, I tripped at Swedetown and dislocated my hip. Several thoughts went through my head as I rolled to the side of Papa Bear trail: "No cell service to call for help! No extra clothing to keep me warm while I wait for rescue!" I eventually pushed enough random buttons on my smartphone to call 911(reminder to self: memorize that key sequence). A kind individual finally skied by and kept me company while the EMS folks searched for me.

During the 45 minute wait for rescue, as I became steadily more hypothermic and my hip began to scream bloody murder, I had plenty of time to ponder the wills my husband and I had drawn up. *How long ago did we do that? Two decades ago? Hmmm—maybe they're a bit out of date.*

Now that my hip is healing, my husband and I are revising our wills with the help of a local estate planner. We're thinking seriously about what legacy we want to leave for the future. I've spent several decades as a faculty member researching Lake Superior's ecological history. Research, of course, is critical for effective land protection. But I've also long wanted to translate my academic research into effective conservation protections for Lake Superior's shorelines, wetlands, and forests. Serving KLT (first as a volunteer, then as a board member, and now as board president) allows me to take concrete actions now to preserve a legacy for the future. Remembering KLT in my will is another great step.

As I've quickly learned, it's easy to get confused by all the options for estate planning. "Estate planning?!" I initially thought. "We don't have an estate! We're ordinary middle-class people." But it turns out even those of us without huge assets can make a real difference.

Sorting through the options can feel a bit overwhelming. But with the help of our advisor, we're realizing that, modest as our assets may seem, they do matter—for KLT and for the interwoven local human and ecological communities that make the Keweenaw so special. As the article "Investing in Tomorrow" in this newsletter describes, this is a wonderful opportunity for all of us to consider our legacy.

I hope you'll consider joining me in this important process.
Sincerely,

Nancy Langston

Nancy Langston, President of the KLT Board of Directors

Conserving the Keweenaw, One Sip at a Time

KLT launched a new event series in January! KLTea Time is an open house that takes place on the first Friday of each month. Thus far, we have had a great turnout for the event each month.

New faces have joined us to learn more about the goals of our organization and ways to get involved. Long-time supporters have come to learn about what's new and visit with other supporters. Conversations had at KLTea Time have sparked new projects and programs, providing an invaluable way for staff and board members to connect with and learn with and from our community and supporters!

Do you have a question or idea you'd like to discuss with KLT staff and members? Join us on Friday, May 3rd & Friday, June 7th! More details and information can be found on page 8.





Meet our Newest Staff Member!



Introducing our newest staff member: B Lauer! B is currently working as KLT's Communications and Program Specialist, leading outreach programs, communications (social media, newsletters, emails, etc.), and volunteer coordination. She comes to us after finishing her master's degree at the University of Maine in Communication and Journalism with a concentration in Conservation Science and Practice. While she is new to the area, her brother - rockstar volunteer Izaak Lauer - has been volunteering with KLT for the past three years and encouraged her to start volunteering with KLT. With a background in ecology and biogeochemistry, B loves translating science into action and stories. She is excited to build upon the amazing work that KLT staff and volunteers have done and create new pathways for people to learn about and fall in love with KLT and the Keweenaw.

Welcome, B!

Parasite Pathways: KLT Land Supports Lyme Research By Dr. Jared Wolfe

Climate change and urbanization are reshaping the distribution of wildlife, along with the parasites and diseases they carry. A striking example of this transformation is seen in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, where the white-footed mouse and its accompanying parasite, the black-legged tick, have expanded northward in the past 20 years, bringing Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases along with them. These mice serve as disease reservoirs that transmit zoonotic disease to the juvenile black-legged ticks that feed on them. As these ticks mature, they seek larger hosts, including deer, dogs, and humans, thereby increasing the risk of disease transmission to people and their pets.

Contributing to this worrying trend are shorter winters, milder springs, and the spread of invasive plants like Japanese barberry, which create favorable conditions for both the mice and ticks, and consequently, the spread of tick-borne illnesses, such as Lyme disease. In response to this growing concern, a team of researchers at MTU, in partnership with the KLT, is investigating how forest structure, invasive plants, and climate change interact to increase the prevalence of Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases.



Photo by Jill Fisher at Boston Pond

This research involves safely trapping small mammals and birds across various KLT sites, including Marsin, Boston Pond, Paavola Wetlands, and Steve Farm Nature Areas, to collect saliva and tissue samples, as well as collect the ticks they carry. These efforts aim to assess the wildlife community and the parasites and zoonotic diseases they harbor. Initial results indicate that white-footed mice have become the dominant small mammal in fragmented forests, with about half of the captured mice testing positive for Lyme disease. In addition to our field efforts, researchers at MTU created a citizen science project, placing kiosks at veterinary clinics in Houghton and Hancock, the Ford Center in Alberta, and throughout the MTU campus to sample ticks that were found on people and their pets. We genetically assess diseases within collected ticks to better understand the prelevance of numerous pathogens, including Lyme disease. The team has launched the "tick talk" online platform, where local citizens can view research results. Similarly, approximately half of the black-legged ticks collected by citizen scientists have also tested positive for Lyme disease.

Moving forward, the MTU research team is committed to working with the KLT to understand drivers of nonnative wildlife disease reservoirs and their tick vectors. This understanding is necessary to develop actionable management strategies, potentially including the removal of invasive species like Japanese barberry and promoting intact, continuous forests. Through a combination of citizen science and focused field efforts at Keweenaw Land Trust nature areas, our collaborative team is dedicated to fostering a healthier, more resilient forest ecosystem for the community.

Dr. Jared Wolfe is an Assistant Professor in the College of Forest Resources and Environmental Science at Michigan Tech. His fields of expertise include wildlife conservation in working landscapes, demographic modeling, and avian molts and plumage.

For more stories like this, visit KLT's blog on our website



Volunteer Spotlight:

Kelly Luck

Kelly Luck has been volunteering with KLT for 13 years. She comes to the KLT office every week to assist with accounting and bookkeeping. Throughout her time in the Keweenaw, Kelly has been a prolific volunteer for area nonprofits. When she and her family moved to Hancock in 1997, her son was a member of the Copper Country Suzuki Association. She began volunteering for the Suzuki Association as the treasurer. It was through this volunteer position that she met long-time KLT Executive Director, Evan McDonald.

Even though Kelly's son was no longer involved with the Suzuki Association, she "stayed [volunteering] and finally some person said, 'You know, you don't need to keep doing this.'" Shortly thereafter, Evan asked if Kelly may be interested in filling an open accounting volunteer role at KLT. As Kelly says, "I came in and checked it out and then I just kept doing it!" "I am a numbers person." This is not only reflected in the meticulous accounting work she does for KLT, but also in the master's in inorganic chemistry she holds, and in her day job doing environmental data review. As someone who works from home and "gets stir crazy very easily," part of why Kelly enjoys volunteering with KLT is to get out of the house and be in community with KLT staff in the office.

Kelly says that when she travels, she is made especially aware of how much she appreciates the quiet solitude that the Keweenaw offers. At the same time, she enjoys the sense of community in the area. Originally from Winnipeg, she is no stranger to cold winters. She says, "It has to be pouring rain or frigidly cold" to keep her and her border collie, Snoop, from getting outside for a walk every day.

KLT is so lucky to have a volunteer like Kelly who is not only willing to donate her time and talents every week, but also to stick with it for 13 years. Kelly has volunteered an estimated 1,500 hours with KLT! Kelly is a valuable member of our KLT team, and we are so grateful for her time and energy.

For more stories like this, visit KLT's blog on our website



Photo by Stan Vitton of Boston Pond

Investing in Tomorrow: Cultivating Your Legacy with KLT

KLT supporters give generously in different ways. While some donate their time and talents through volunteering, others contribute cash or stocks to protect and steward land. Others look ahead and pledge gifts to be granted in the future. However you choose to give, we are grateful for your support!

Planning for the future can be daunting and easy to put off but taking time now to explore options can help you benefit charities you love and appreciate – even seemingly small estates can make an impact. Consider naming KLT in your will or as a beneficiary of a retirement plan, life insurance policy, or charitable trust. It is helpful to state how you wish the organization to use gifted funds. Unrestricted contributions provide the most flexibility and help sustain the overall organization, but KLT honors donor intent for gifts directed to a specific use such as land conservation or stewardship.



Photo by Sienna Falzetta of Churning Rapids

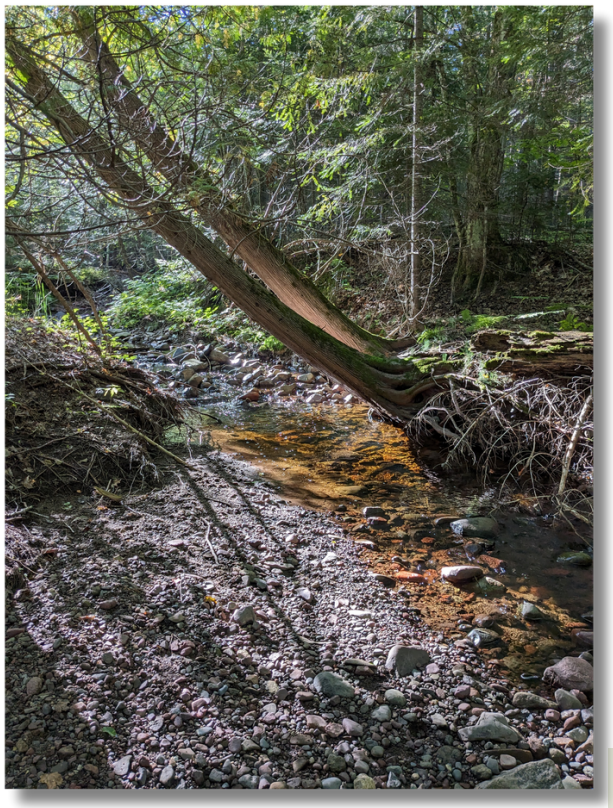


Photo by Pat Toczydlowski of Lily Creek

While we encourage you to inform KLT of future intended gifts, it is especially important to include the land trust up front to consider gifts of land or real estate. KLT must ascertain if it can accept and use the gift as intended. Lands upholding our conservation priorities can be permanently protected as a natural area open for community use, however, KLT has benefitted greatly from gifts of real estate that can be sold with proceeds directed by the donor to a mission-related purpose. Donating land or your home now and reserving its use for your lifetime can provide tax benefits and ensure your wishes are carried out.

Take time now to think about your wishes and put them into writing. Planning for the future can give you a sense of peace and accomplishment. The impact of planned giving extends beyond financial contributions: It signifies your belief in the enduring importance of environmental stewardship and a commitment to the well-being of the Keweenaw.

Name KLT in your plans as: Keweenaw Land Trust, a Michigan non-profit corporation with the address of 49902 Limerick Street, Hancock, Michigan 49930. KLT's FEIN is 38-3299537.







Photos by Missy Newland (top) & B Lauer (bottom) of a KLT hike at Lightfoot Bay Coastal Wetlands On February 11, 2024

KLT Staff

- Pat Toczydlowski, Interim Executive Director; Project Specialist
- Jill Fisher, Botanist & Stewardship Manager
- Carolyn Meingast, Office Manager
- B Lauer, Communications & Program Specialist
- Curtis Perala, Marsin Property Manager

KLT Board of Directors

- Nancy Langston, President (Chassell)
- Stan Vitton, Vice President (Hancock)
- Bill Leder, Treasurer (Houghton)
- Alex Hirzel, Secretary (Hancock)
- Mike Abbott (Atlantic Mine)
- Mare Grohowski (Hancock)
- Calvin Koski (L'Anse)
- Evan Lanese (Hancock)
- Jim Northey (Atlantic Mine)
- Jamie Robertson (Allouez)
- Louie Vencato (Hancock)



KLT Staff (Curtis Perala not pictured)

Become a KLT Member!

Memberships apply to a household!

Donate to become a member!

Money

Suggested donation of $50 ($20 for students)

Or

Time

10 hours suggested

Member benefits

- Support meaningful conservation work
- Special member events
- Elect directors
- Printed newsletters
- Connect with the KLT community

DONATE TO BECOME A MEMBER OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Please provide your current information if updates are needed

Name _____ Phone _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Email Address _____

CHOOSE YOUR MEMBERSHIP GIVING LEVEL (JOIN OR RENEW)

- ☐ $20 Student Membership
- ☐ $50 Supporter
- ☐ $100 Guardian
- ☐ $250 Steward
- ☐ $500 Champion
- ☐ Other $ _____

☐ I am interested in receiving information about planned giving

Donations are tax deductible. Please mail this form and payment to our office:

49902 Limerick Street
Hancock, MI 49930

Donate online
https://keweenawlandtrust.org/donate

KLT respects your privacy and confidentiality. We do not sell our data and respect requests for anonymity.

49902 Limerick Street
Hancock, MI 49930

(906)482-0820
info@KeweenawLandTrust.org

KeweenawLandTrust.org

@TheKeweenawLandTrust

@KeweenawLandTrust

Upcoming Events

KLTea Time: *Happy Hour Edition*
Friday, May 3rd | 4:00pm-6:00pm
KLT office

Do Frogs Say Ribbit?: Exploring Frogs at Boston Pond
Sunday, May 5th | 1:00 pm
Boston Pond

Stewardship Day: Tree Potting
Saturday, May 18th | 1:00pm-5:00pm
Meet at KLT office

KWBREC Native Plant Pick-up
Saturday, June 1st | 1:00pm-5:00pm
KLT office

KLTea Time
Friday, June 7th | 11:00am-1:00pm
KLT office

To learn more...

Visit the "Upcoming Events" page on our website for detailed descriptions of all events and registration forms.

https://keweenawlandtrust.org/upcoming-events