



CLEAR THINKING

NOVEMBER 2020

ISSUE No. 33

OUR MISSION

is to preserve, protect, and manage the natural environment within the watershed and township for future generations.

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MAKING LEMONADE IN 2020

As we close 2020, we have so much to celebrate in a year that was unpredictable, at best. Sometimes, it seemed like the lemons just kept coming. So, we breathed deeply and spent the year working with a growing group of community members to protect what we love about this part of our world. If you want smiles over the winter, just [click on our first video](#) to bring up the images and memories we all share!

What are we celebrating? We celebrate the volunteers who donated their time and talent to produce the video for the entire community to enjoy. We celebrate completion of the Kasota Island Restoration and substantial progress on the landscape refresh. We celebrate the new kiosk at Brennan Woods built by volunteers in memory of long-time Conservancy supporter, Nancy Wilhelm.

There's more! We celebrate completion of planning for the constructed wetlands at our newest preserve, Settlers Wetland. Construction begins in 2021. Over 115 energetic "next gens" helped us celebrate our 15th year of Knee-high Naturalists in July.

We celebrate small group outdoor (or Zoom) "Porch Chat" conversations with almost 50 Conservancy families this summer. We learned why these neighbors support the Conservancy and what programs and projects they see as important to the entire community. In fact, the invasive [Eurasian watermilfoil](#) control project gained momentum from those conversations. We plan to continue these sessions.

In 2021, the Conservancy will celebrate its 30-year anniversary! Read the story on page 3 about "Oaktober", an early anniversary start. With Covid cooperation, we plan to continue the anniversary celebration next summer by holding our every-two-year community gathering to reconnect, have fun and benefit the Conservancy's mission. Circle June 26, 2021 on your calendar and join us in thinking positively and creatively to make this happen safely! Jim Horein has at least 4 high-profile auction items already lined up!

Thirty years is a healthy benchmark for any organization. We asked Angie Derheimer O'Neill, the first Conservancy president, to reflect on the founders' early vision. Angie grew up on the west shore. She quickly told us, "My great joy of the Conservancy's work is the protection of Brennan Woods. This is where I played as a child and developed my love of nature." Angie also recalled the excitement of "seeing the community come together to raise funds to preserve Kasota Island."

Years like 2020 also convince us that we need your support more than ever. We used the year to focus on sustaining this work for future generations. More of you volunteered at Work Days than ever. Many of you donated generously. New volunteers are participating on Committees. Thank you. It takes a community to protect what we love.

We also concluded it was important to send a separate letter to the entire community this year to share why everyone's support is so vital. We hope you will read our letter and respond generously. You can also support CLTLC through Giving Tuesday on December 1st. Details are on our [website](#) and [Facebook Page](#).

The Conservancy is your way to protect what we all love and treasure. Stay safe and healthy so we can see you again next season to enjoy it together.

Karen Horrell, President
Bridget Harrison, Executive Director



Environmental Education

By William L. Culbertson

Vultures are the most righteous of birds: they do not attack even the smallest living creature. -Plutarch

If ever a bird has been vilified, reviled, and maligned, the turkey vulture is certainly that bird. Their ugly, red-skinned heads have no feathers, and they are scavengers that eat the rotting flesh of dead animals. Those base facts turn most people's attention to prettier birds with more pleasant life styles. And yet, let's not rush to judgment. After all, the turkey vulture's scientific name, *Cathartes aura*, translates to "cleansing breeze." There's more to the story.

Turkey vultures do not kill their food like eagles or hawks. Instead they, uh, clean up dead bodies of animals that would otherwise decay into festering hotbeds of disease-causing microorganisms. Vultures do carrion rather than carry-out, and that makes them good stewards of the environment.

Large birds with wingspans of about six feet, vultures are brownish-black overall. The undersides of their wings are marked with silver-gray patches. Relatively light in weight, around three pounds, for the size of their wings they soar effortlessly on rising columns of air scouting for their next meal. Their wings have long feather "fingers" at the ends, and they hold their wings up at a greater angle (dihedral) than most birds making them very agile fliers. That nimbleness lets them track the rotting-meat scent of their next meal from over a mile away. Although vultures have good vision, it's the fragrance that leads them to their lunch.

The bald red-colored heads? Vultures sometimes plunge their heads inside a carcass to feed, and skin is easier to clean than feathers. Their beaks are tough and strong enough to tear apart, well, whatever they happen to find.

Social animals, turkey vultures roost in large groups. In the early morning hours, they perch with their wings spread, the horaltic pose, to warm themselves before their day's work. Groups of vultures wheel inside columns of rising air on the lookout for something to eat. Prevailing west winds across Clear Lake are forced upward by the hill that lines the southern part of the east side of Clear Lake. During the warmer months, you can see the local colony of turkey vultures gliding effortlessly in the updraft along the shoreline.

Rather than build their own nest, a vulture looks for a remote, out-of-the-way location to raise their young. Very much family oriented, birds feed their young for up to eight months after the youngsters can fly on their own. Even afterwards, they tend to stay together in



Photo credit: Judy Oxenger Johnston

extended family groups. Vultures are not aggressive nor do they shy away from nearby humans. In fact, rescued birds will bond with their human caregivers. Of course this tolerance has its limits. If threatened, a vulture will vomit the contents of its stomach on the offender—contents that started nasty and have only gotten worse.

While turkey vultures have some repulsive—at least to us—habits, they perform an important cleanup function. Perhaps we should thank them like we would a guest at a party who, although having a few revolting habits, always helps tidy up.

I eat like a vulture. Unfortunately the resemblance doesn't end there. -Groucho Marx



To get involved or support:

**(260) 527-1072 • www.clearlakeconservancy.org
111 Gecowets Drive • Fremont, IN 46737**

Natural Areas Preservation

Since the arrival of 200 bare root native Tulip and Bur Oak trees from the Indiana DNR Division of Forestry on the Conservancy's doorstep in March, we've been honoring the "Year of the Tree." It began with dedicated volunteer and self-proclaimed "tree-hugger", Don Luepke, potting and caring for all of these trees. Throughout the summer many trees were given to friends of the Conservancy, for a modest donation, and some of the Bur Oaks were handed out at the Knee-high Naturalist "All About Oaks" program to attending families in July.

The culmination of this project happened in the month of October with a week-end dedicated to planting trees with generous support from a Thrivent Financial grant. Named *Oaktober*, this tree planting event engaged 28 volunteers of all ages planting 53 trees in our community on 20 private properties and 4 Conservancy preserves. Having surpassed our goal to plant 30 trees in honor of our 30th Anniversary this year, it's safe to say this event was a booming success! Generations to come will enjoy the planted trees.

Included in our volunteers were members of Girl Scout Troop #52116 from Fremont Elementary School. Both 3rd and 1st graders helped plant trees on private and Conservancy properties. These young girls loved partnering with the Conservancy to help make the world a better place!

Thank you to all of our volunteers for making this day a success and to all of our property owners that joined us in offering a forever home for these native trees. A huge thank you to Don Luepke for all of his time and hard work in preserving, protecting, and managing these trees through the year. If you find a location perfect for a native Tulip or Bur Oak tree in the coming months, please let us know as we have plenty of trees bundled up for the winter that will be ready for new homes next spring.

Until then, thank you for supporting the Conservancy in 2020, the "Year of the Tree."



Don Luepke sharing care instructions for a newly-planted tree.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Clear Lake Lions Club
Daniel & Pamela Disser
Tom & Marie Felger
Clifton & Judith Fenton
Ann Gullberg
Meg Keck
Tom & Susan Kramer
Terry & Koggy Newcomb
Bill & Kim Pepple
Evan & Susie Rice
Lori & Tim Wagner
Nancy & Bob Webster
Cora Wood

Conservancy Sustainers:
Alex & Susan Connett
Karen & Jack Horrell
Terry & Koggy Newcomb

**List reflects contributions since
our September issue of
Clear Thinking. Contact us if
you see a mistake.*

Brennan Woods Boardwalk Project:
Jim & Karen Bushey of J&M Renovations

Eurasian Watermilfoil Project:
Sue Compo
Matt & Claire Timmer

Grant Support:
PayPal Giving Fund
Thrivent Financial

Honorarium:
Roger Johnson
From Zach Dean of Bryan Truck Line

The McArdle & Barnard Wedding
From Molly McArdle & Zachary
Barnard

Memorial:
Fred Augspurger
From Kyle & Lindsey Augspurger

Ed & Barb Disser
From Sarah & Bill Bolger

Linda Driver
From The Schlosser Family

Dr. Robert Jensen
From The Benevity Community Impact
Fund on behalf of Marshall Chase
The Benevity Community Impact Fund
on behalf of Micron Technology

Klaus Wenger
From Philip & Suzanne McHugh

In-kind:
Alivia Behnfeldt
Rick & Angie Behnfeldt
Alan & Emma Brown
Bill & Judy Greffin
Mike Kellermeier of Core Promo
Dick Waterfield

Stay Connected. Email info@clearlakeconservancy.org to sign up for e-news and events.

Get Out What you Put In

As many of you know, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed earlier this year. It waived all individual retirement account (IRA) required minimum distributions (RMDs) for 2020. You, yourself, may have taken advantage of this act and continued to let your IRA funds grow tax-deferred throughout 2020.

Whether or not you have taken advantage of the CARES Act, perhaps you will consider making a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) to the Conservancy. A QCD, generally a non-taxable distribution, must be made directly by the trustee of your IRA to an organization eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions such as the Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy. The maximum annual exclusion for QCDs is \$100,000 and you must be at least 70 1/2 or older to make the distribution.

To see if this tax opportunity fits your charitable giving plans, talk to your tax preparer. There is no easier way to make an immediate impact for conservation at Clear Lake, allowing you to see the difference your donation is making today, and pay less in taxes.





Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy
111 Gecowets Drive - Clear Lake
Fremont, Indiana 46737

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**Find out on our website! -
Trees of Clear Lake Twp.**

