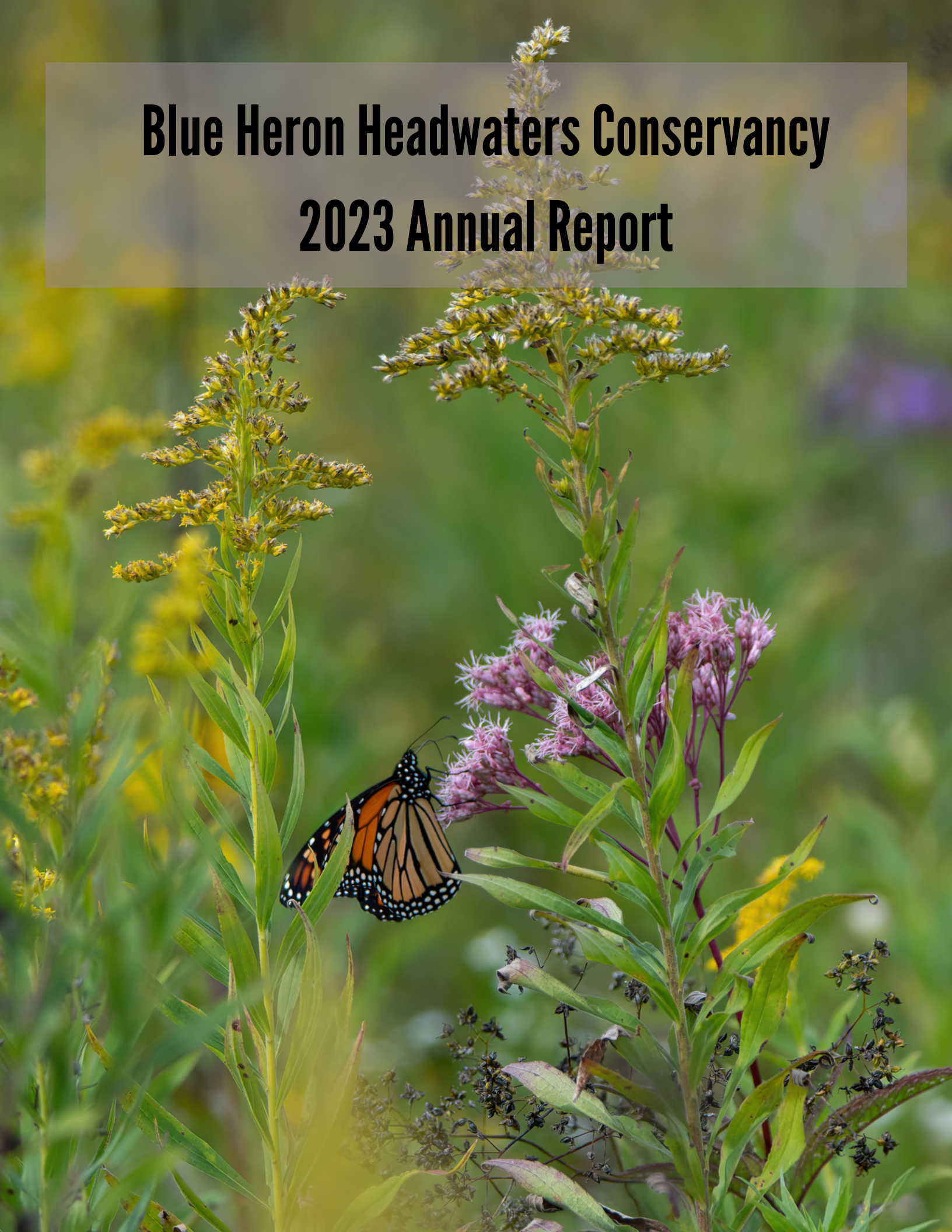


Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy

2023 Annual Report





Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy
7150 Dixie Highway, Suite 1
Clarkston, MI 48346
Blueheronheadwaters.org

STAFF

Executive Director: Susan Julian
Donor Engagement: Kelly Duty
Communications & Volunteers: Chris Hardman
Web Site & Office Manager: Dana Campbell
Database Coordinator: Mary Herzenstiel
Outreach Events & GIS Specialist: Anastasia Alexandrova
Bookkeeper: Janet Porter

BOARD

President: Emily Duthinh
Vice President: Mike Metz
Secretary: Bette Moen
Treasurer: Michael Dougherty
Past President: Christopher Benedict
Performance Auditor: Marilyn Zigarac

DIRECTORS

Nicole Breadon
Jean Gramlich
Susan Julian
Larry Kodosky
Carolynn Krause
Lora Perkins
Todd Roeser
Alec Smith
Madelyn Swan

Blue Heron Headwaters is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect the land, water, and wildlife in the headwaters region of the Clinton, Shiawassee, Huron, and Flint rivers through preservation, stewardship, and education.



Fringed gentian by Theresa Ray



Conservation

Land conservancies are community-based, nonprofit organizations dedicated to the permanent protection and stewardship of natural and working lands for the public good. In 2022 we announced our expansion beyond Oakland County to encompass all the major tributaries within the four major watersheds in the headwaters region of Southeast Michigan. More coverage area requires more infrastructure. We moved to a larger office (right next to our old office) and hired a Director of Donor Engagement. By raising more money, we can protect more land and water.



In November, we hired Kelly Duty as our Director of Donor Engagement. We are thrilled to welcome her to our talented staff. Kelly joins us after a successful career in the medical field. Her experience with non-profits comes from volunteering and running fundraisers.



Anonymous donors lived on a 113- acre wooded parcel in Davisburg for more than 20 years through a life estate with reduced taxes. In November, we took over the responsibility of managing the property and improving wildlife habitat.



In October, Board President Emily Duthinh and Executive Director Sue Julian received Oakland County's 2023 Oak Land Award on behalf of the conservancy. The award recognizes community partners who preserve green infrastructure in Oakland County. We share this award with all of our supporters, who also advance the mission of land preservation.



Stewardship

Taking care of 60 properties that total 1,550 acres is a big job.

Conservation requires more than just owning land. We have to steward the land and that means removing invasive trees and bushes and planting natives in their place.

1,550
Acres protected

Every year we inspect each property and develop a maintenance plan which emphasizes plant and animal diversity. When feasible, we maintain pathways, install interpretive signage and contact neighbors to support our work.



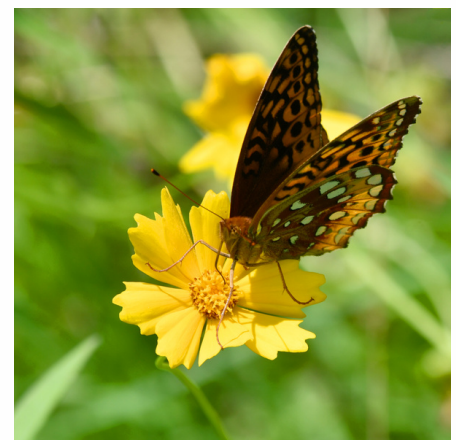
We improved our property inspection program utilizing an ArcGIS program called Survey 123. We now have an electronic system we can use to track and compare property reports. We will also use it to schedule improvements and projects.



By working with the Homeowners Association at Hidden Ridge in Davisburg, we were able to remove a significant amount of invasive species. Conservancy volunteers worked side by side with neighborhood volunteers to remove the mature bittersweet vines that were strangling beautiful native trees.



A tornado wreaked havoc at our Butterfly Preserve in Davisburg by damaging many trees. Volunteers and staff cut and stacked tree limbs, performed general maintenance and built trails. We are preparing this preserve for the construction of our first scenic overlook later this year.



Education

“We save nature & You can too” is our consistent message. Through workshops, kids’ programs, internships and presentations, we enable people of all ages to join the movement. We partner with local libraries, the park district, other non-profits and Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops.

9,289

People opened our most popular Facebook post

Our social media channels are dedicated to educating people with beautiful photos, interesting facts and informative videos. We increased our Facebook followers by 14% and added 3 educational videos to our YouTube channel.



Board Member Emily Duthinh gave 6 presentations in 2023. Topics included rain gardens, planting native species and how to get rid of invasives. She also gave tours of our properties and narrated educational videos.



Girl Scouts earned a badge by attending our workshop about native turtles. They learned about turtle behavior and the dangers turtles face when nesting. Then the girls made nest protectors for turtle eggs. We have been loaning out nest protectors for several years. They protect the eggs from predators and allow the turtles to hatch safely.



Summer intern Owen Herzenstiel produced 3 instructional videos about removing invasive species and the value of milkweed. Owen is a sophomore in the Television and Digital Media Production department at Ferris State.



Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization. They help us in the office, in the field and represent us in public. This year we had 120 volunteers of all ages build bridges, paint walls, enter data, remove invasives, work

Volunteers donated

7,301

hours of work in 2023

with kids, plant native species, teach workshops & staff events. With their help, we expanded our education program and introduced a new Bird Nest monitoring program with the Cornell Lab of ornithology. We honored all of our volunteers at a special event in our new office.



Volunteer Claire Beutler recruited 24 volunteers to plant trees on one of our pocket parks. Her goal is to provide food and shelter for native birds with these trees.



Volunteers Patty Reiset and Israel Rios helped prepare our old office for the move and then painted our new office. Patty created posters, wall art and designed our new office layout.



Volunteer Jean Gramlich received our Tom Bullen award for outstanding volunteer. She serves on our Board, our Governance Committee and our Stewardship Committee among others. Jean uses her scientific knowledge to assess potential property acquisitions and helps recruit new board members, donors and volunteers. Thanks, Jean for all that you do.

Partners

Partner organizations

Boy Scout Troop 185

City of the Village of Clarkston

Clarkston Impact

Cornell University Lab of Ornithology

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan

Headwaters Trails

Holly Township

Land Trust Alliance, Midwest Section

MSU Conservation Stewards

Oakland Audubon

Oakland Conservation District

Oakland Co Planning & Economic

Development

Oakland County CISMA

Road Commission of Oakland County

Shiawassee River Water Trail Coalition

Sierra Club, Southeast Michigan Group

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Village of Ortonville

WildType Nursery



With soil stabilization vegetation in place, the construction of the canoe/kayak launch at Fish Lake Road was complete. Headwaters Trails transferred the property to Holly Township in June along with Blue Heron's Conservation Easement to protect water quality



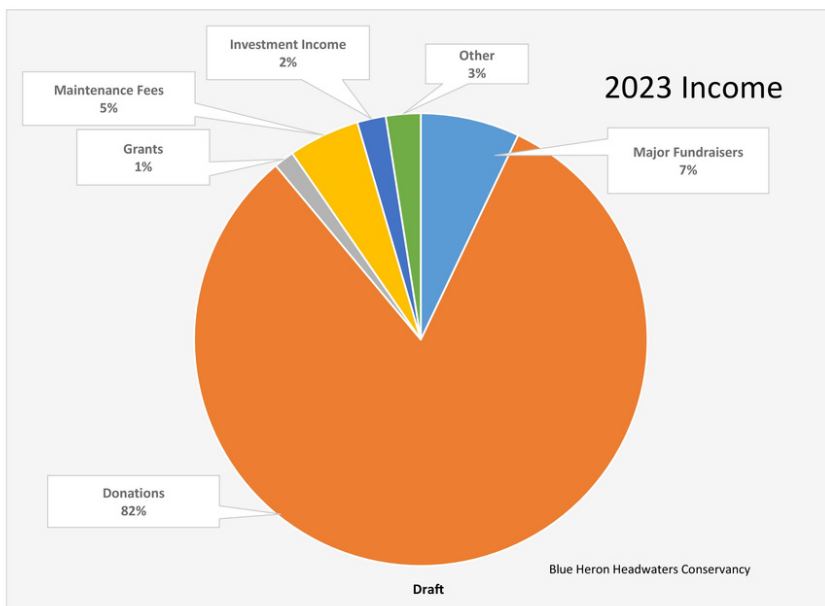
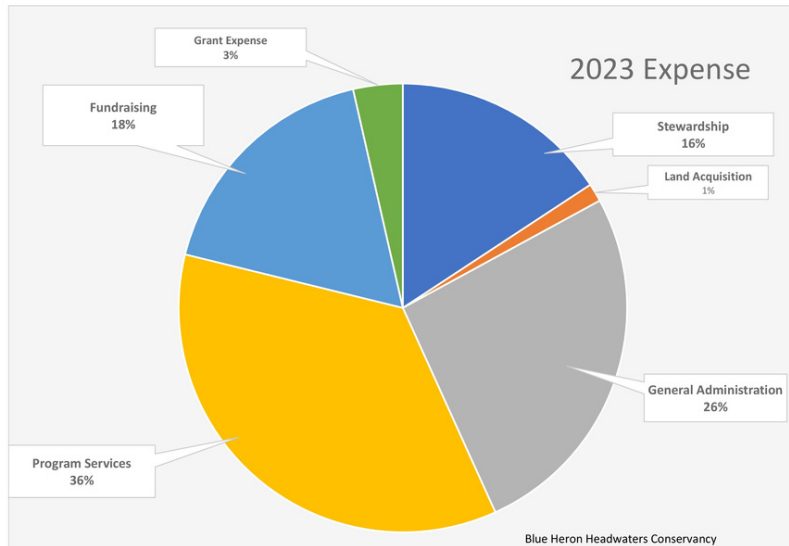
The Cornell Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative financed part of our work to restore Voorheis-Beardsley's old horse pasture to a short grass prairie. Our goal is to provide the right environment for declining grassland birds such as the Eastern Meadowlark. →



Nine members of the Conservation Stewards program run by MSU Extension, chose capstone projects to benefit the conservancy. Their projects covered stream measurements, beaver conservation and a Powerpoint outlining the benefits of conservation.



Finances



These financial diagrams do not include in-kind donations, particularly 7,301 volunteer hours valued at \$232,171 (Current national value of each volunteer hour is \$31.80)

Poweshiek Campaign Success

The Poweshiek Capital Campaign to purchase land and reserve stewardship funding for the federally endangered Poweshiek skipperling butterfly concluded in 2023. Previous donations allowed BHHC to purchase 21.5 acres and add another 4.8 to secure the environment preferred by the butterfly. It became clear in 2022 that the precipitous decline of the species could only be halted by nurturing eggs collected in Springfield Township and raising them in a zoo setting in order to release them back to the land. BHHC's role became raising funds to steward our potential release site. We completed the fund drive with the benevolent support of a special one-to-one \$30,000 match offered by Greg and Michele Petrosky. Thank you to all who responded to the match and donated to this back-from-the-brink effort.