

## Meet Chris May, Stewardship Program Manager

Chris May joined The Nature Conservancy in 2008 as the Stewardship Program Manager. Chris directs state-wide stewardship efforts, including invasive species management, habitat assessment and restoration, and capital improvements (trails, signage) at preserves. He also works closely with other conservation and science staff to develop conservation plans and design and implement new projects.

Dear Friends,

Thank you for another year of hard work and dedication to The Nature Conservancy. You, as volunteers, are a critical asset to the success of our work. Whether you helped out in the office or in the field, I appreciate your time, talents, and energy. I realize you have many options when deciding how to spend your free time and you choose to spend it working with the Conservancy to help protect our beautiful state.

With Gratitude,  
Chris May  
Stewardship Program Manager.

## Free Field Friday: A Fantastic Success!

Despite studies in recent years showing a decline in the number of people participating in outdoor activities, more than 230 people participated in The Nature Conservancy's first-ever Free Field Friday on Sept. 26, far more than expected from organizers. So many people called to register that second and even third trips had to be scheduled at some locations. In the end, almost every trip filled to capacity.

"We had no idea how popular this would be – we're thrilled with the response," said Dr. Christine Hall, director of conservation programs. "We've tried to do field trips a lot of different ways, and even had to cancel some last year because of low turn-out, but this just shows us how much people care about and want to learn more about our preserves."

Save the Date for a spring version to be held on Saturday, April 25th, 2009 with the theme "Seeking Signs of Spring"! Keep an eye out on the website for the locations and details.

## Unique Volunteer Opportunity in 2009

The wolf-moose project of Isle Royale needs your help. We are looking for volunteers to join Research Expeditions to be conducted during spring and summer of 2009. These expeditions are a vital aspect of the project's field research and a truly unique opportunity to learn about the wolves and moose of Isle Royale. All the details are at [www.isleroyalewolf.org/participate](http://www.isleroyalewolf.org/participate).

During the past 20 years, more than 500 people have participated in these expeditions. The experience is rich, and many have returned to participate in more than one expedition.



Chris May, the new Stewardship Program Manager for Michigan © Chris May

Would you like to become more involved with your favorite preserve? Consider becoming a [volunteer preserve monitor](#).

### News

Keep informed about what's happening! Visit our website for these and other news articles at <http://nature.org/michigan>.

### Purchase of Saugatuck Dunes Under Consideration

The Nature Conservancy is working with several partners to protect 171 acres of Lake Michigan dunes and shoreline at Saugatuck.

### Advice for the New President

What should Barack Obama do about the environment? [Read our letter to him](#).

### Border Fence Threatens Preserves

Learn how [the proposed U.S.-Mexico border fence endangers](#) a unique Nature Conservancy preserve in Texas.

### 2008 Year in Review

<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/annual/>

### Careers

Interested in working for The Nature Conservancy? <http://nature.org/careers>

### Get Involved!

- [Join GPN](#)
- [Watch Conservancy videos online](#)
- [Renew your membership](#)

## Office Volunteers

Interns and other volunteers spent more than 1000 hours in the Michigan Field Office (MIFO) in Lansing working on projects such as event planning, record keeping, recycling, research, copying, filing, assembling materials, and other general office projects.

## Ives Road Fen Preserve

With the help of many individual volunteers and groups from the Toledo ZOO Teens, Ford Motor Company, Monroe High School, Lenawee VOTECH, Adrian College incoming freshmen, and the UM Conservation Biology class, we finished clearing the fen south of the Volunteer Management Unit. The north end of this fen is mostly grass, sedges, and forbs and the south end has a mixture of native wetland shrubs and trees. A wooded hillside overlooks the whole area. Russell has mapped the area and assigned the names Bog Birch to the part cleared last year, Super Sumac to the part cleared this year, and Sam's Slope to the hillside. Thanks to everybody who helped this year and we look forward to seeing you at future workdays!

## Shiawassee

2008 was a great year for volunteers in the Shiawassee! The Friends of the Shiawassee River (FOSR) have partnered with The Nature Conservancy in Michigan for the last two years to improve habitat conditions in the Shiawassee River and its watershed. Since 2006, the FOSR have engaged hundreds of local volunteers in river stewardship through invasive removal, tree and shrub planting along the river banks, and debris removal. In 2008, the Friends of the Shiawassee logged over 1100 volunteer hours, removed 300 pounds of garlic mustard, and pulled 20 yards of debris from habitat. Now, through funding provided by the Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps), the Friends have partnered with the Livingston County Office of the Drain Commissioner to sample macroinvertebrates, or large creatures without a backbone, usually insects, from the Shiawassee River to rate habitat conditions.

The Shiawassee Stream Team is made up of volunteers from around the watershed in Shiawassee, Livingston, and Genesee Counties. Twice annually the Stream Team collects macroinvertebrates from ten locations on the Shiawassee River or in a tributary. Volunteers sample the river bed, packs of dead leaves and vegetation along the bank, rocks, plants, and other locations to be sure a thorough sample of life is collected. The premise is simple- if the habitat is 'good', meaning low sedimentation, plenty of oxygen, clear water and so on, the insects found will be both diverse and include species sensitive to water quality. If the habitat is 'not good', collections will include more tolerant species, the aquatic equivalent of raccoons and rats, and few or no sensitive species. Based on the diversity and tolerance of the insects found, each site is ranked as either poor, fair, good or excellent. Not only did our Stream Team have fun and get dirty collecting insects from the river habitat, they also worked alongside aquatic ecologists to help identify collections. Together, the FOSR and Livingston County held two identification workshops in which Stream Team members sorted insects and identified them to family level.

The Nature Conservancy, the FOSR and Livingston County will continue to sample the Shiawassee River to track changes in habitat over time. Our next sampling date is in the Spring of 2009. Volunteers interested in joining the Stream Team, participating in invasive species removal or other activities in the Shiawassee watershed can contact Heidi Frei at [shiawassee\\_mi@tnc.org](mailto:shiawassee_mi@tnc.org).



Individual volunteers plus the U of M Conservation Biology class remove invasive honeysuckle from Ives Road Fen Preserve. © Chuck Pearson



Volunteers cut buckthorn at Ives Road Fen. © Chuck Pearson



Landmark Volunteers create flowerbeds for the city of Cedarville. © Shannon Daniels



Shiawassee Stream Team: Webb Creek Volunteers. © Heidi Frei