

## Remembering Dorothy Sands

When ParkLands founder Loring Merwin began assembling an all-star team of community leaders to reshape central Illinois' land preservation strategy in the mid-1960s, he quickly secured two key, trusted advisors – public accountant Dorothy Sands and attorney Guy Fraker.

Mrs. Sands, who passed away March 26, 2021 at the age of 100, was officially voted on as ParkLands Treasurer in 1968, a position she served for 22 influential years. Her role appointing ParkLands' first board of trustees and directors further secured our early success.

Asked about establishing ParkLands' bold vision of protecting land for public use through private ownership, Mrs. Sands recalled fondly how, "[people] responded to the concept, landowners responded, of keeping land for our kids."

We are all those kids who now enjoy the fruit of Dorothy Sands' life.

Guy Fraker paid this tribute to Mrs. Sands:



Photo: The Pantagraph

*I note the passing of Dorothy (Dotie) Sands in Los Altos, Calif. on March 26<sup>th</sup> 2021, with a considerable spirit of nostalgia.*

*She was married to Ted Sands, a noted professor of Geology at ISU where she taught Accounting. She was one of the first five female CPAs licensed in this State, all that time raising 3 children.*

*She served as the Treasurer of ParkLands from 1968 to 1990. This was a somewhat thankless task, carrying the burden of the State of Illinois' annual not-for-profit reports, as well as the State and Federal tax returns at no cost to ParkLands. This was in addition to tracking the contributions, keeping track of the various bank accounts, investments, and on and on.*

*She performed these tedious, unglamorous tasks without fanfare. More than that, she brought a spirit*

*of cheerfulness, optimism, and pride in ParkLands that was invaluable during those early years.*

*She was not hesitant to offer opinions on some of the controversial decisions that had to be made, without precedent in those years. She did this always in a pleasant manner, with respect for the views of other board members.*

*She was a constant bundle of energy, so it is not surprising that she lived to reach 100 years. I called her out of the blue several years ago. Her spunk, spirit, vitality and continued interest in ParkLands came through loud and clear.*

*When we look back with pride at the remarkable success of our beloved land trust, her contributions to today's ParkLands are a significant part of that success.*

- Guy C. Fraker

## Upcoming Events

June

26

### Night Event – Members only

A family-friendly event for all ages. Local biologists will share about the nocturnal creatures that call Letcher

Basin home before leading expeditions to observe them. Guests will call for owls, use echolocators to observe bats, light sheets to survey insects, and much more! <http://bit.ly/NightEvent>

July

10

### 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Bike Ride

Who would like to go for a bike ride through some beautiful restored prairie and woodlands along the

Mackinaw River this summer? That's right! ParkLands will be hosting our fourth annual bike ride on July 10, 2021. Won't you join us and support the ParkLands mission of preserving prairie and forest habitat along the Mackinaw making it one of the cleanest rivers in Illinois? We again will have a 20 and 50 mile route. New this year will be a 100 kilometer ride.

<https://www.parklandsfoundation.org/bikeride/>

July

24

### Tale of Two Prairies

Two different prairies, two different ecosystems, one story of conservation. Join us for a morning

comparing two high-quality examples of Illinois' most famous landscape; prairie. Start at either Ridgetop Hill Prairie Nature Preserve and Letcher Basin Land & Water Reserve, and switch halfway through. A hayrack trailer will be used to tour Letcher Basin.

<http://bit.ly/TwoPrairies>

August

8

### River Adventure

In follow up to last year's popular mussel event, we will again explore the river for a hands-on learning

opportunity about the Mackinaw River's amazing aquatic diversity. Yes, we'll find mussels, but we'll also search for the Mackinaw's 94 fish species, micro-invertebrates, macroinvertebrates, and more. Don't miss the story on the Mackinaw's aquatic diversity at the end of this newsletter.

[http://bit.ly/River\\_Adventure](http://bit.ly/River_Adventure)

## Volunteer Workdays

Time and date may change. More workdays may be added. Visit <http://bit.ly/ParkLandsEvents21> to sign up!

Date	Location
June 12	Weston
July 16	Merwin
July 17	Sweeney Woods
September 3	Chinquapin Bluffs
September 11	Chinquapin Bluffs
September 17	Letcher Basin
October 15	Merwin
November 7	Cayuga Ridge
November 13	Kenyon-Baller Woods



## Bike Ride Volunteers Needed!

Help our riders stay safe, hydrated, and well-fed by claiming a shift at any 1 of 3 locations.

<https://www.parklandsfoundation.org/event/bike-ride-volunteers/>

Location	Shift	Task
Lexington Pavilion	5:30-8:30am	Parking, registration, setup
Merwin Preserve	6:00am-9:00am	Aid station setup and support
	9:00am-12:00pm	Aid station support
	12:00-2:30pm	Aid station support and teardown
Comlara Park	6:00am-9:00am	Aid station setup and support
	9:00am-12:00pm	Aid station support
	12:00-2:30pm	Aid station support and teardown

# 4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BIKE RIDE

JULY 10<sup>TH</sup> 2021



*Enjoy a Ride along the Mackinaw!*



Poster image by Jan Donaldson Brandt

Poster Design by JeffBessArt

**To Register Visit: [ParkLandsFoundation.org/bikeride](https://ParkLandsFoundation.org/bikeride)**

- 20 Mile Ride starts at 8:00AM
- 50 Mile & 100 km Rides start at 7:00AM

Location Starts at:  
Keller Park Pavilion  
699 North Elm St. Lexington, IL



For more information  
contact: Erin Herbez at  
[erin@parklandsfoundation.org](mailto:erin@parklandsfoundation.org)  
(309) 454-3169 (Ext.16)



**\$40 For ParkLands Members**  
**\$45 For All Others**  
**with Tee**  
(If registered before June 24th)  
**\$50 To Register**  
**After June 24th**

**Enter our Raffle to win a \$500 gift certificate from Bloomington Cycle & Fitness**  
Tickets may be purchased for \$5.

**Special Thanks To Our Sponsors:**

- Bloomington Cycle & Fitness • Kemp's Upper Tap
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**ALL proceeds go toward support of ParkLands Foundation.**





## Earth Day

Volunteer Challenge

April 22–25 2021



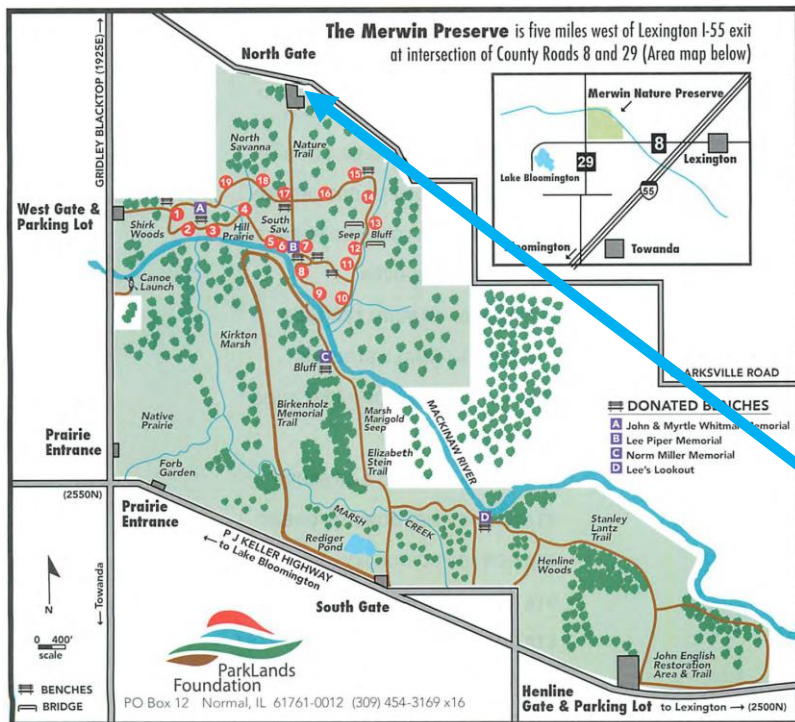
Thank you to all of our volunteers and sponsors that made our first ever Earth Day Volunteer Challenge a huge success! 140 volunteers comprising 12 teams across 8 preserves slashed mounds of invasive brush and planted nearly 1,000 trees! It was a whole lot of fun, all in the name of preserving the biodiversity of our natural places. Everyone went home with a custom ParkLands bandana. Our 2021 challenge winners, Team Cyclepaths of Kenyon-Baller Woods, were awarded over \$250 in prizes!





## Wildflower Walk

More than 80 guests enjoyed what has become a spring tradition at ParkLands. Familiar spring ephemeral flowers such as Virginia bluebells and woodland phlox abound, while the trained eyes of Dr. Roger Anderson, Dr. Joe Armstrong, Mary Jo Adams, and Jan Turner brought attention to the often subtle array of the forest floor.



## Relief!

You spoke, we listened. Thanks to generous donations from board members Eric Smith, Michael McKinley, and Dan Deneen, a long-term public porta potty has been installed at Merwin's north gate on CR 2650N.

Yes, even our less glamorous needs require financial support. To help our infrastructure keep pace with growing demand, please visit [www.parklandsfoundation.org/donate/](http://www.parklandsfoundation.org/donate/)



## Cast Your Vote

ParkLands was nominated to receive donations through Target's Circle program. Your votes will determine ParkLands' share of the donation!

Vote here:

<https://www.target.com/circle/community-voting>

## We've partnered with Target Circle.

**Vote by June 30.**

**Target circle**

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## The Shocking Diversity of Mackinaw River Fishes – And How to Protect Them

When Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Fisheries Biologist Trent Thomas wades into the Mackinaw River, he never knows what he will find. The ecological diversity of the Mackinaw is recognized statewide, but perhaps few see it firsthand more than biologists like Thomas. So what exactly hides in those pools and eddies, and how do we know?

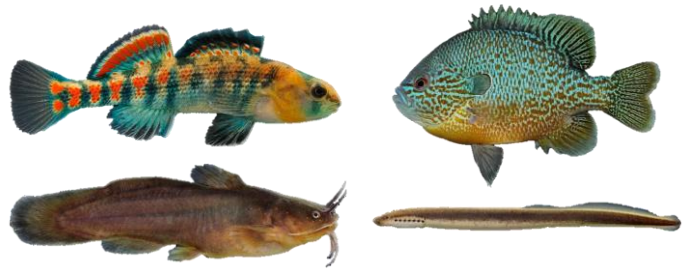
**Fish Surveys** The Illinois Department of natural Resources (DNR) Division of Fisheries began surveys of the Mackinaw River basin in 1978. All river basins in the state, including the Mackinaw, have been surveyed on a 5-year rotation since 1987.

Fish are surveyed in two main ways; electrofishing the deeper areas by boat, or by pulling a seine net (pictured below) through shallow water. Researchers visit nearly 30 different locations along the Mackinaw during each survey cycle, including several ParkLands locals - Wyatt's Ford, Sweeney Woods, Merwin, and stretches of Henline and Panther Creeks.



Since 2020 surveys have not yet been tallied, Thomas shed light on what trends through 2015 reveal about the river's overall health.

**The Good** Going back to 1978, 94 fish species have been recorded in the Mackinaw River basin. The most abundant fishes are Sand Shiners, Bluntnose Minnows, Central Stonerollers, Striped Shiners, and Golden Redhorse, accounting for 46% of the fish collected in 2015. The otherworldly Orangethroat Darter pictured above is also relatively common.



*The Orangethroat Darter and Longear Sunfish (top) are common in the Mackinaw Basin, while the Tadpole Madtom and Chestnut Lamprey (bottom) are rare native gems worth celebrating.*

The rarest fish, represented by single individuals, were a Chestnut Lamprey, Mooneye, Black Bullhead, Flathead Catfish, Tadpole Madtom, and Mosquitofish. Additionally, Warmouth and Pirate Perch were recorded from the Mackinaw basin for the first time.

Preliminary 2020 survey results made waves when an adult male Lake Sturgeon was located in the Mackinaw basin. This endangered fish appears in the fossil record for more than 130 million years. "It is exciting to see these native species rebound in the Mackinaw River basin," said Thomas regarding these new and rare detections.

**Worth Attention** Of the 94 species known to have lived in the Mackinaw, only 72 were detected in the 2015 survey - meaning 23% fall below detection limits. Local extinction, called extirpation, is a possibility.

Not all existing species are made the same, either. The Illinois River, of which the Mackinaw is a tributary, is infamously plagued by flying Silver Carp. The 2015 survey revealed high numbers of non-native invasive Asian carp in the Mackinaw River, consisting mostly of Silver Carp and Grass Carp. The Common Carp, also introduced, are present. Bighead Carp were detected in the 2020 survey for the first time.

Of most alarm to many recreational anglers is a recent 80% reduction in the Smallmouth Bass population basin-wide. This triggered a five-year supplemental stocking program to recover the population and increase natural reproduction potential. Fortunately, preliminary 2020 results show a recovery in numbers and evidence of successive generations.

Of course, the relative abundance of species in 1978 does not necessarily represent the glory days, either.



**What We Can Do** There are steps we can all take to protect the Mackinaw's fishes. "The Smallmouth Bass, although recovering impressively, continues to be vulnerable to over-exploitation", says Thomas. Abstaining from even catch-and-release fishing during their spawning season is best since failed spawning seasons are believed to be a factor in their decline. Thomas also points out, "If you really want to do something for the fishes, start eating Asian carp. They are delicious!"

Angling aside, we can all protect the river's native fish by continuing to support conservation efforts like the Parklands Foundation. Thomas points out that preserving and managing native landcover reduces impacts from contaminated runoff from agriculture

and other developed land. Native landcover reduces the amount of runoff, as well, through absorption of rainfall to replenish groundwater and through evapotranspiration from trees and grassland.

Riparian trees provide shade and nutrient inputs that benefit stream inhabitants. Fallen trees and other large woody debris provide instream habitat and create deep pools through hydraulic influences.

**See It For Yourself** Join us **August 7<sup>th</sup>** at **Hayes Woods Preserve** as we again wade into the river to survey aquatic life. From fish to mussels to microinvertebrates, you are bound to leave amazed. Register here: [http://bit.ly/River\\_Adventure](http://bit.ly/River_Adventure)

## Board Member Spotlight



Meet Parklands board member, Dr. Kathryn Everett.

### Years with Parklands

I have been a member of the Board since fall 2019. Michael Brown introduced me to Parklands.

### Why Volunteer?

Parklands is an amazing organization to be a part of as the Mackinaw River watershed is integral to the health of our local ecosystems and the Gulf of Mexico. By preserving the function of the lands surrounding the Mackinaw River, we are reducing inputs from the booming Central Illinois agricultural industries and preserving habitats for thousands of native plants and wildlife. Parklands also provides locals residents, families, and college students with a living laboratory to explore and learn from, which is invaluable in my mind. I am so grateful for the visionary work of the Parklands founders and the continued work by and support of the organization to this day by all of our members and volunteers...not to mention I ALWAYS have fun when I am working on a Parklands volunteer team!

### Favorite Parklands "Spot"

If I have to pick just one, I love how the tree canopy opens up at the entrance of Letcher Basin prairie with the river surrounding all sides. The huge oaks on the bluff and overall expanse of Chinquapin Bluffs is also hard to beat, and getting your feet wet after a waterside picnic at Hayes Woods makes for a unique experience.

### Profession

I grew up in Peoria, IL, and returned to central Illinois in 2011 after finishing my PhD in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation at the University of Florida. My profession prior to coming home was focused in marine science, primarily sea turtle conservation. Currently, I am a professor at Eureka College, where I teach Environmental Science and Sustainability and serve as the College's Director of Sustainability. I have been a member of the faculty full-time since the fall of 2017. Three of my former students have been summer interns at Parklands, one of them is now a fellow board member (Morgan Armbrust)! Today my professional passion lies in local food and sustainable agriculture, native plant landscaping (think Tallamy's Homegrown National Park), and campus sustainability.



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