



2025



Seven Ponds Nature Center

Annual Report

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sevenponds.org

About Us



Mission of Seven Ponds:

To conserve its natural environment as a sanctuary for native plants and animals and to serve as a community resource for environmental education that fosters an understanding, appreciation, and stewardship ethic for our natural world.



Our Vision Statement

Seven Ponds Nature Center uses thoughtful, innovative, and effective teaching to educate and inspire our community. We support the idea that humankind must live in harmony with the natural world, making wise choices in everyday life. We have a direct and positive impact on the people we serve.

Seven Ponds is a nature sanctuary protecting native flora and fauna. It is also a natural and beautiful retreat for our visitors. We strive to preserve the biodiversity of our region and serve as a “living” demonstration of how all of us can manage our own lands for plants and animals. We recognize that natural areas and open spaces are diminishing resources and we encourage their preservation and protection, especially in the Seven Ponds watershed.

Seven Ponds is active in the community, providing resources and promoting the nature center’s ideals to the people within its proximity. We are part of a network of regional, state, and national environmental organizations working to achieve common goals.

As nature constantly evolves and adapts, so too does Seven Ponds Nature Center. We actively seek new approaches to protect the land and educate the public.



Our Values Statement

At Seven Ponds Nature Center we value the natural environment. We believe in the importance of the continuing existence of native plant and animal ecosystems. They are valuable for their own sake and as places for peace, enjoyment, reflection, retreat, and spiritual renewal. We believe biodiversity plays a critical role in the health of native ecosystems and that it must be maintained.

We believe that all people must have an environmental ethic if the natural world is to remain healthy. We believe education and the sharing of knowledge play a key role in developing this ethic.

Seven Ponds values community involvement as an important part of our endeavors. We believe service to our community is important and is an integral part of our success. It is important that our community view the nature center with a sense of pride.

We believe the quality of the personal relationships shared by visitors, volunteers, and staff is an important part of our success. Our volunteers and staff are a team that value teamwork, communication, trust, and respect.



Our Team Staff



Carrie Spencer
Executive Director



Amy Sadler
Office Manager /
Volunteer Coordinator



Madison Christol
Naturalist /
Land Steward



Adrianna Allen
Naturalist /
Collections Manager



Nico Bradford
Naturalist / Social
Media Coordinator



Gina Stoldt
Weekday
Receptionist / Gift
Shop Manager



Damian Goidich
Weekend
Receptionist /
Maintenance



Del Hunsinger
Maintenance
Engineer



Daryl Bernard
Birding Field Tour
Leader

Board of Directors

Nancy Kautz - Chairperson
Micaela Boomer - Vice-Chairperson
Nancy Buck - Treasurer
Paul Messing - Secretary
Trina Bresser Matous
Kathy Churchill
Ruthanne Flory
Greg Gossick
Rachel Hanson-Hervey
Richard Klee
Rodrigo Andrade
Julie Markgraf
Diane Matheis
Argie Renieri
Alan Rifenkark
Evelyn Slagon
Scott Tiegs
Charlie Turner



A Year in Review

from our Executive Director



Dear Friends, Supporters, and Partners

When reflecting on 2025 and looking forward to 2026, I find myself thinking about what makes Seven Ponds Nature Center truly special. I believe it is the passion of our staff, our volunteers, and the community of people that supports us that makes us exceptional. It is this passion for the environment and our community that keeps us moving forward making big impacts connecting people to nature.

We had a year of transition as leaders within Seven Ponds moved on to start new chapters in their story. After serving as Executive Director since 2017, Daryl Bernard retired at the end of July to his little house on the Molasses River to enjoy all the birds. Daryl did not leave Seven Ponds completely, though, he will continue as our Bird Field Tour Leader, organizing and leading all of our birding tours. Joanna Pease, Chairperson to our Board of Directors, and champion for Seven Ponds, stepped down from the board this year to begin a new part of her life closer to her family. We are deeply grateful to both Daryl and Joanna for all their work, and for making Seven Ponds such a large part of their lives.

We made a few big impacts this year with our volunteer and our land stewardship programs. Our volunteers are the life blood of Seven Ponds, and without them we could not accomplish most of the important work we do. We worked to strengthen our volunteer program by restructuring our staff to create a Volunteer Coordinator position. With this change, a strategic plan was created, solely for this program, focused on volunteer recruitment and retention. Amy, our Volunteer Coordinator, was able to use our CRM to make this program more robust, easier for our volunteers to sign up for volunteer opportunities, and has allowed us to get a better understanding of how we rely on our volunteers and where they are most needed.

Our 498 acre property also received a lot of attention in 2025 because of our land stewardship program. Our Land Steward, Madison, along with staff and many volunteers, continued to improve our diverse plant communities by removing non-native, invasive plants, planting native seeds and plants, monitoring nest boxes, burning prairies and fields, and so much more. All this added up to 1333 work hours, surpassing 2024's total work hours.

Our plan for this year is to continue strengthening all our programs, creating more opportunities to partner with our community, and being the place all of us find peace and connection in nature. 2026 will, also, be the year of dotting our i's and crossing our t's in preparation of our 60th anniversary in 2027. Sixty years of impact and we want to learn how Seven Ponds has impacted you. Expect to hear from us asking for all your stories about Seven Ponds, and how Seven Ponds has impacted the story of your life.

With Gratitude,

Carrie Spencer

Land Stewardship

We have almost **500 acres**, including forests, fields, prairie, wetlands, and our kettle lakes.

As **stewards to Seven Ponds**

we are charged with conserving these natural environments as a sanctuary for native plants and animals.

Led by our **Land Steward, Madison Christol**, staff and volunteers work hard planting native plants, removing non-native invasive plants, performing controlled burns, monitoring nest boxes and vernal pools.

In **2025**, staff and volunteers worked a **total of 1,333 hours!**

Removing:

- Asiatic Bittersweet
- Autumn Olive
- Canada Thistle
- Crown Vetch
- Dame's Rocket
- Exotic Honeysuckle
- Garlic Mustard
- Multiflora Rose
- Purple Loosestrife

Improving Habitat by:

- Monitoring Nest Boxes
- Controlled Burns in our fields
- Vernal Pool Monitoring
- Educating our Community
- Planting seeds, trees, and shrubs
- Invasive Mowing

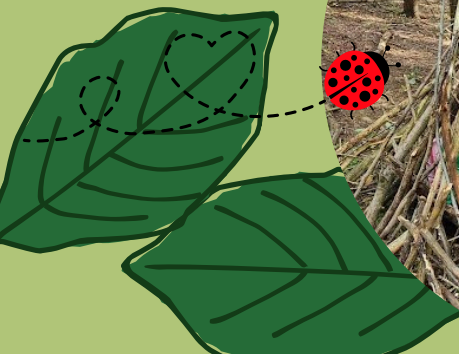


Environmental Education

A key part of our mission is to be a community resource for environmental education. Through a range of programs, events, outreach, field tours, summer camp, and interactions with visitors at the nature center, **Seven Ponds connected 17,476** people to nature!

We could not do all this very important work without the help of our **Assistant Naturalists**.

Our volunteer naturalists are trained by the naturalist staff to help us with school groups, outreach, and special events. **This dedicated group of volunteers put in almost 500 hours** to make 2025 a successful year!



Volunteers

With such a small staff, our **VOLUNTEERS** play a **BIG ROLE** in the functions of the nature center. Seven Ponds volunteers put in a lot of **HOURS** to get things **DONE!**



Clubs:

- Friends of Seven Ponds (Stingers) - 731.5 Hours
- Butterfly Garden - 99.5 Hours
- Friends-of-Herbs - 118 Hours
- Astronomy Club - 96 Hours
- Photo Club - 361 Hours
- Beekeeping Club - 80 Hours
- Birding Club - 65 Hours



Our clubs not only offer a lot of opportunities for our community to do activities while connecting with nature, but also keep our gardens looking great and help fundraise for us.

Volunteers that help us run our day-to-day operations, and help us complete large projects:

- Board of Directors - 558.50 Hours
- Maintenance - 317.50 Hours
- Animal Care - 133.75 Hours
- Library - 365.75 Hours
- Office - 8.5 Hours



Building and Grounds

Our **20+ year old boardwalk along Miller Pond** in Paul's Woods was in desperate need of repair. With a grant from the Polk Foundation and a generous gift from a long-time member of Seven Ponds, our Maintenance Engineer, **Del Hunsinger**, got to work in **January 2025 to rebuild this quarter mile boardwalk**. Del led the staff and volunteers through this 6-month project!



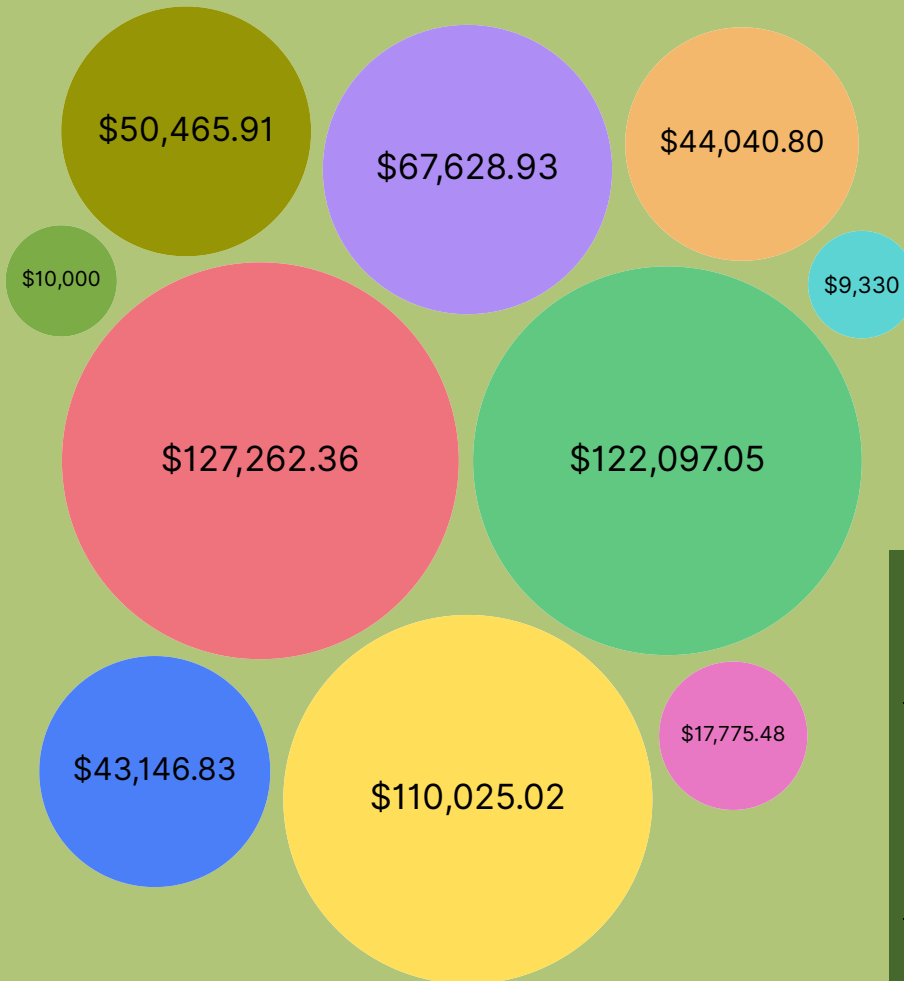
In July of 2025, a **group of volunteers from Stellantis** helped Del and Damian **build and complete a much needed boardwalk** to our tower in Paul's Woods. The lumber used was recycled from the old wood removed from the Miller Pond Boardwalk!



Finances and Fundraising



2025 Gross Revenue Sources



Legend

- Program Fees
- Donations
- Gift Shop Sales
- Grants
- Endowment Fund Dividend
- Reserve Fund Dividend
- Field Tours
- Membership Dues
- Fundraising
- Admission Fees

Seven Ponds Investment Funds

Endowment Fund

Market Value 1/1/25 - \$2,699,684.29
 Market Value 12/31/25 - \$2,885,137.19
Income for 7P 2025 - \$127,262.36

Reserve Fund

Market Value 1/1/25 - \$388,616.00
 Market Value 12/31/25 - \$419,858.06
Income for 7P 2025 - \$17,775.48

2025 Fundraisers

Corks and Caps - Over **160 people attended this event**, which featured a wonderful dinner, wine and beer, raffles, live auction, and a beautiful setting at the Metamora Golf and Country Club. Because of amazing generosity, **we raised almost \$43,000!** Special THANKS to Rick Fleming and the rest of the country club's team. A BIG thank you to John Tomaschko for lending his auctioneer expertise.

Holiday Auction and Christmas Party - Almost **160 members and their guests** attended this fundraising celebration. With over 120 items in the silent auction and 18 live auction items, our amazing members helped us **raise nearly \$19,000**. Thank you to all that donated items, food, and your time to make this event successful! A BIG THANK YOU to Brian Rowley, auctioneer extraordinaire.

Special Gifts - Our year-end fundraising campaign provides critical funds to help move us into the new year on strong footing. Through generous online and mail-in donations **we raised almost \$39,000**.