

## SPEAKER PROFILES FOR 2024 MICHIGAN NATIVE PLANT CONFERENCE

### *Planting Native for Healthy Waters*

#### KEYNOTE SPEAKER – DR. LYNN HEASLEY



**Dr. Lynn Heasley is a Professor in the Institute of Environment and Sustainability at the School of Environment, Geography, and Sustainability at Western Michigan University**

Dr. Heasley is the author of *A Thousand Pieces of Paradise: Landscape and Property in the Kickapoo Valley*, and co-editor of *Border Flows: A Century of the Canadian-American Water Relationship*. Her most recent book, *The Accidental Reef and Other Ecological Odysseys in the Great Lakes*, received a grand prize for nonfiction from the Next Generation Indie Book Awards, and a Nautilus Silver Award for lyric prose.

Dr. Heasley is currently working on *Dreamscapes: Ecocultural Relationships in Three Great Lakes Landforms*. This project explores the influence of local ecological knowledge on biodiversity stewardship in three underappreciated but globally important landscapes and waterscapes: alvar "pavement" grasslands on Drummond and Manitoulin Islands in Lake Huron; the St. Clair River Delta forming the U.S.-Canada-Bkejwanong border; and freshwater coastal sand dunes.

#### **Presentation:**

**“Local Ecological Knowledge as Storytelling, and Why This is Fundamental to Biodiversity Conservation in the Great Lakes.”**

From her hometown neighborhoods in Kalamazoo to Great Lakes islands and waterways, Lynne Heasley will explore how local ecological knowledge-building can become a powerful form of storytelling. She argues that revised storytelling is fundamental to repairing our relationships with the natural or more-than-human world; and to tackling global biodiversity, climate, and water crises.

## **BREAKOUT SPEAKER – ERICK ELGIN**



**Erick is an aquatic ecologist and water resources educator with Michigan State University Extension. Erick has a M.S. in Aquatic Ecology from the University of Calgary and a B.S. in Natural Resources Management from the University of Minnesota.**

Erick Elgin's main responsibilities as an aquatic ecologist with Michigan State University Extension are to promote and research the conservation, protection, and restoration of our freshwater systems. Erick's recent efforts focus on aquatic plants, lake monitoring, natural shorelines, invasive species, and long-term lake management. Erick helps lead Michigan's volunteer lake monitoring program, the MiCorps Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program, and is the vice-chair of the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership.

### **Presentation:**

#### **Lakeshore Conservation: Challenges of Protecting and Restoring Nearshore Vegetation**

Widespread loss of wetland and nearshore habitat along inland lakes has heightened the need for conservation activities that focus on protecting and reestablishing native vegetation in the shoreline zone of lakes. However, restoration demand using natural techniques along residential shorelines remains relatively low compared to the need. To increase conservation practices on densely populated residential shorelines, societal norms and the human dimension of restoration need to be addressed. In this presentation, I will explore restoration scenarios that balance riparian landowner wants with ecosystem needs and discuss societal norms that are barriers to the conservation of Michigan's shorelines.

## **BREAKOUT SPEAKER – PAIGE FILICE**



**Paige Filice is a natural resources educator with Michigan State University Extension. Paige has a M.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife from Michigan State University and a B.A. in Conservation Leadership from Lake Superior State University.**

Paige Filice works for Michigan State University Extension as a natural resource educator with a focus on water resources. Her main responsibilities include coordinating the aquatic invasive species education program RIPPLE (Reduce Invasive Pet and Plant Escapes) and promoting the wise use, protection, and restoration of Michigan's freshwater ecosystems.

### **Presentation:**

#### **“Garden to Beautify Your Yard and Protect Lakes and Rivers.”**

Michigan is home to one of the largest sources of freshwater and with that comes great responsibility. The health of our lakes, streams, and wetlands depends on many factors including how we manage our yards. Learn how landscaping techniques such as rain gardens can be used to curb harmful runoff and protect our waterways.

### **BREAKOUT SPEAKER – DR. JO LATIMORE**



**Dr. Jo Latimore is a faculty member at Michigan State University in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. Dr. Latimore holds a B.S. in Biology from Albion College, an M.S. in Biological Sciences from the University of Notre Dame, and a Ph.D. in Fisheries and Wildlife from MSU.**

As a faculty member at Michigan State University in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Dr. Latimore serves as the Director of the MSU Extension Center for Lakes and Streams and the Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps), Michigan’s volunteer lake and stream monitoring program. She collaborates with natural resource managers and communities to develop innovative solutions to complex challenges facing aquatic systems, including creative approaches to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species while protecting our native plants and animals.

### **Presentation:**

#### **“Life in the “Weeds”: Exploring the Rarely Seen World of Aquatic Plants.”**

Let’s face it – aquatic plants get a bad rap. We refer to them as “weeds” or, even less accurately, “seaweed”. We complain about them touching us when we swim, snagging our fishing tackle, or tangling in our boat motor propellers. We see one aggressive invasive plant overtaking part of a lake and jump to the conclusion that all aquatic plants are undesirable. We should take another look! Within our lakes – mostly below the surface - exists a diverse and beautiful underwater forest. There are many shapes and sizes, from the tiny duckweed to the lush growth of large-leaf pondweed. There are plants that grow massive root systems, some that float freely in the water column, and others that rest on the surface. Some are even carnivorous! Native aquatic plants benefit our lakes by taking up nutrients, and stabilizing shorelines and bottom sediments. They provide habitat for fish, frogs, turtles, and insects. Many waterfowl rely on them for food. Healthy native plant communities can also make areas of a lake less susceptible to invasion by non-native plants. Come learn about this fascinating Michigan plant community that exists just below the surface!

## **BREAKOUT SPEAKER – YU MAN LEE**



**Yu Man Lee is a Conservation Scientist and Herpetologist with the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI), Michigan State University Extension. She completed a M.S. degree in Wildlife Science at Oregon State University and a B.S. in Natural Resource Management at the University of Michigan.**

During her 25 years of experience working as a conservation scientist and herpetologist with the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI), Yu Man's primary responsibilities include designing and conducting inventories, monitoring, and research to assess the status, distribution, and ecology of rare and declining amphibians and reptiles and their habitats in Michigan and providing information to diverse stakeholders to help guide and inform conservation actions. She also helps maintain Michigan's Natural Heritage Database and provides technical consultations and education and outreach to inform biodiversity conservation. Yu Man is one of the co-chairs of the Michigan Vernal Pools Partnership, and helps coordinate the Michigan Vernal Pool Patrol, a statewide, community science-based vernal pool mapping and monitoring program.

### **Presentation:**

#### **"Mapping, Monitoring, and Conserving Vernal Pools, the Coral Reefs of Michigan's Forests."**

Vernal pools are more than just mud puddles in the woods that dry out in the summer! These small, seasonally flooded, diverse wetlands are extremely important to the biodiversity and health of Michigan's forests, providing critical habitat for a variety of organisms, including species that rely on vernal pools for their survival. Vernal pools also contribute to nutrient cycling, water storage, and groundwater recharge. Because of their small size and temporary nature, vernal pools can be difficult to identify in the landscape and are not well-protected under current wetland regulations. Limited information on the locations and condition of vernal pools also hampers efforts to manage and protect them. Many of these wetlands have been destroyed or degraded due to a number of factors and may be further impacted by a changing climate. An overview of vernal pools and efforts to better understand and conserve them in Michigan including an update on the Michigan Vernal Pools Partnership (MVPP), a public-private partnership of over 30 organizations working to promote awareness and conservation of vernal pools, and the Vernal Pool Patrol, a statewide community science-based mapping and monitoring program, will be presented.

## **BREAKOUT SPEAKER – LAWRENCE SOBSON**



**Lawrence Sobson is an Urban and Community Forester/Partnership Coordinator with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Lawrence is a graduate of Michigan State University and is an ISA Certified Arborist with the state of Michigan.**

Lawrence is based out of the DNR's Belle Isle office where he currently assists communities and groups around the state with technical service about trees. Through his work with the Urban and Community Forestry Program, Lawrence brings the benefits of trees to Michigan communities through planning and partnership. He assists with forest management activities, community policy development and education. The program is funded through the USDA Forest Service and is advised by a volunteer council that promotes conservation and maintenance of urban forests.

### **Presentation:**

#### **Trees for your Community**

This presentation will provide information regarding proper tree species, planting, maintenance, space considerations, common concerns, and the benefits of trees to advance the conservation and maintenance of urban forests throughout Michigan.

## BREAKOUT SPEAKER – SHELLY STUSICK



Shelly Stusick is the *Go Beyond Beauty* Program Specialist with the Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network (ISN). Shelly is a Master Gardener and has a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resource Management. She has experience in natural area management, invasive species, gardening, agriculture, and outreach.

*Go Beyond Beauty* is a program created by the Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network (ISN Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau and Manistee counties) to encourage nurseries, growers and landscapers to NOT sell or install any high priority ornamental invasive species while encouraging the substitution of native plants in the landscape. In 2020 *Go Beyond Beauty* received funds from the Michigan Invasive species Grant Program to help take the organization statewide. Shelly plays a key role in this expansion and is eager to share her information with the general public.

### **Presentation:**

#### ***Getting to Know Go Beyond Beauty***

Originally created to celebrate garden retailers who have committed NOT to sell high priority invasive ornamentals in northwestern Michigan, the *Go Beyond Beauty* program has since expanded and grown over more than ten years to include garden professionals and community members statewide. Going above and beyond current Michigan regulations, this grassroots program recognizes businesses or community members who make decisions that benefit their local habitat and educates about native replacements for common invasive ornamentals and invasive plant management.



## **PANEL DISCUSSION ON “HOW TO DO A NATIVE GARDEN”**

### **PANEL SPEAKER – BILL SCHNEIDER**



Bill Schneider received a Master of Landscape Architecture from the School of Natural Resources at the University of Michigan. In 1996 he established Wildtype Native Plants • Ecological services LTD., in Mason Michigan. Wildtype provides design, consulting & contracting services for ecologically oriented projects focused on restoration and preservation of native landscape. Wildtype also operates a nursery, growing over 300 species of native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, grasses, and emergent wetland plants.

### **PANEL SPEAKER – ESTHER DURNWALD**



Esther has owned and operated Michigan Wildflower Farm (MWF) with her husband, Bill, since 1996. Located in Portland and founded in 1988, MWF produces documented native Michigan genotype wildflower/prairie grass seed, is a supplier of Great Lakes Region genotype seeds, provides ecological native landscaping services and hosts educational opportunities. Esther oversees the operation of MWF with the help of an experienced team. She received a B.S. Degree in Forestry from Michigan Technological University, is a past President of the Wildflower Association of Michigan and a current member of the Native Plant Guild. Esther especially enjoys using the farm as an opportunity to share the value and beauty of nature with others, and getting out to walk, snowshoe and cross country ski the property as much as possible.

### **PANEL SPEAKER – AMY HEILMAN**



Amy Heilman is a certified landscape designer and has been planning and implementing sustainable gardens for over 20 years, first in California, where water restrictions drive most planned landscapes, and currently in her home state of Michigan. Her business, *The Living Garden*, refers to the ecologic life that can be brought to any garden space with the introduction of appropriate native plant species. Her goal is to encourage property owners to take an active role in the planning and care of their native gardens and to use these spaces to learn about the natural world and the web of life that is supported by it. Amy has worked in various areas of natural resource management, landscape restoration and native plant nursery operations. She is a long-standing member and past president of Wild Ones River City Chapter and a founding member of the Native Plant Guild.