

CREATIVE IDEAS FOR Fund- and Awareness-Raising

Not every land trust in the country can afford to run a capital campaign or go after a big grant. Some rely on the creativity of their board, staff, volunteers and members to come up with ideas that raise funds for and awareness of their conservation group. Here is a small sampling. Send us your ideas at editor@lta.org.

Running for Pennies

Peggy Horner juggles many titles. She is a wildlife program supervisor for the Missouri Department of Conservation; advisor to the Greenbelt Land Trust (her local trust); and the state representative to the Missouri Land Trust

Coalition, the state's service center. But when she brainstormed ways to raise money for land conservation she turned to her informal title: dedicated runner.

"I run a lot!," laughs Peggy. "So I asked friends, coworkers and family to pledge a penny per mile, then ran for a whole year, at the end of which I told them how far I ran and what they owed. I called it Pennies for Preservation. But people pledged more than just pennies."

Peggy kept track of her mileage for the year with her running GPS watch. She collected pledges in December 2007, then started her yearlong trek in 2008, giving quarterly updates to her pledgers.

"Besides friends and family, the Greenbelt Land Trust asked their board members, community members and others to pledge," says Peggy. "As a result, 51 people pledged anywhere from 1 cent to 25 cents a mile."

For Peggy, her journey was not only a fundraiser, it was an awareness-raiser for land trusts and land conservation. "I wanted to bring people in as supporters who had never heard of the work of land trusts."

In total, Peggy ran 1,507 miles and raised about \$2,300 for 10 different land

trusts in eight states. "Pledgers could choose which organization received their donation," says Peggy.

Greenbelt Land Trust received about \$1,400, which will be used for board development and training.

Peggy offers encouragement to others to pledge their time or creative talents to help their land trusts: "Anyone can come up with a good idea. Think about your particular skills or talents and apply those to raising funds or support for your land trust."

Not Just for the Birds

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy has gone to the birds! The third Saturday of each May is given over to the Southwest Michigan Team Birdathon, an annual fundraiser run by Berrien County Parks that netted almost \$4,000 for the conservancy in 2010.

Nate Fuller, conservation and stewardship director, explains how the Birdathon works: "Teams of birdwatchers, typically representing a conservation organization, collect pledges from friends, family members, friendly looking strangers, etc. Pledges can be a flat rate or by cents per species of bird. Birdathon teams have from midnight until 7:00 p.m. to find as many species as they can within the borders of Berrien County, Michigan."

"Our totals over the past years have ranged from 115 to 135 species. A pledge of 25 cents per bird will likely result in a \$30-\$35 tax deductible gift to conservation and stewardship in



Peggy Horner doing what she does best!

COURTESY OF PEGGY HORNER



COURTESY OF NATE FULLER

LEFT: Teammates Nate Fuller and Katie Kahl brought their little ones along for Birdathon. They and their spouses have been a team since 2002. "This year good napping places took priority over the best birding spots," says Nate.

BELOW: Rich Moore and Bob Whisner (at left in photo) introduce newbie geocachers to the sport during Westmoreland Conservancy's Caching with the Conservancy.



COURTESY OF BOB WHISNER

Michigan. Of course, flat donations are always appreciated as well," says Nate. This year the team identified 126 species by the end of the day, "extra impressive when we realized we had gotten all of the species within an 8-mile radius of our 'home base' for the day in Three Oaks, Michigan," says Nate. Nate's highlights of the day describe a birder's paradise: a pair of screech owls dive-bombing his head at dawn; watching red-headed woodpeckers explore nest cavities; hundreds of swallows, purple martins and black terns hunting insects; listening to the chorus of so many different songs amongst the towering maples and beeches; a [human] baby quietly snoozing as the best "warbler wave" of the day moved by; picnicking at the shore while an osprey, Caspian tern, and cormorants flew by; an orchard oriole making an appearance; and finishing the day with a barred owl and a beer. Nate, who shares a red-topped head with certain woodpecker species, says that he and his wife have been heading up a team for the conservancy since 2002. "Over the years we've raised around \$35,000 for our Stewardship Program. What impresses me the most is that all the different teams combine to annually raise over \$40,000 to support all sorts of conservation groups in the region. And what a great excuse to go birding!"

Caching with a Conservancy

You know you have a winning event when, despite pouring rain and thunderstorms,

more than 85 people attend. On May 22 the all-volunteer Westmoreland Conservancy hosted Caching with the Conservancy 2010 in Murrysville, Pennsylvania. "The sport of geocaching is a wonderful tool for promoting green spaces," says Tracee Imai, volunteer event coordinator. "As geocaching grows in popularity, increasing numbers of people will be seeking places to do it. Property owned by land conservation groups is often ideal and may be eagerly sought after."

So what exactly is geocaching? According to Wikipedia, geocaching is an outdoor activity in which the participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver to hide and seek containers, called "geocaches" or "caches," anywhere in the world. A typical cache is a small waterproof container, often camouflaged and/or hidden, with a logbook and sometimes tradeable "swag" inside. The sport is often described as a game of "high-tech hide and seek." Geocaches are currently placed in more than 100 countries and on all seven continents, including Antarctica. After 10 years of activity there are over one million active geocaches published on various websites.

The basics go like this: someone hides a container somewhere, posts the latitude and longitude on a website, and people go out and find the container. When found, a player will sign the log, then post any

details of the hunt on the website. Seekers often have to search a 10- to 15-foot-wide area to find the cache. Through its annual event, Westmoreland Conservancy has embraced geocaching as a way of promoting its reserves. Many of the participants had never been to Murrysville or even heard of the conservancy. Comments received after the event included: "I'll be back to explore the other areas further" and "[We'll be] joining the conservancy."

"This event also allows Westmoreland Conservancy to strengthen relationships with local organizations such as Sportsmen and Landowners Alliance of Murrysville, the Girl Scouts, the Loyalhanna Grotto, the Municipality of Murrysville and the Murrysville Garden Club," says Tracee. "These groups provided support and activities during the event."

Participants are already planning for next year and the conservancy has received requests from people who are eager to volunteer. One geocacher is planning a trash cleanup for the conservancy.

"No organization should miss this opportunity to expand awareness of the group and its properties, grow its membership and develop a pool of eager volunteers!" says Tracee. 🍀

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