



VOLUME 20
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SUMMER, 2012

the newsletter of the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."
—Margaret Mead*

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Summer greetings to everyone! As I write this article we are in another heat wave. We certainly have had weather this spring that is conducive to outdoor activities and the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy has offered a number of events where you can get out and enjoy nature. Here's a brief summary of some of our most significant projects and activities:

John D. Dingell Friend of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Award

The 2012 John D. Dingell "Friend of the Refuge" award was presented to GINLC at the May 5th International Wildlife Refuge Alliance benefit dinner on Fighting Island in LaSalle, Ontario. GINLC was recognized for work in transforming the former NIKE missile site east of the Grosse Ile Airport (which was known as the Nature Area from 1993 to 2010) into a native prairie with woodland trails and shoreline observation decks. In 2003, as part of our rehabilitation efforts, GINLC and several partners completed a shoreline project which restored 280 ft. of barren shoreline into an ecologically diverse coastal wetland. In 2010, the Nature Area was transferred from the EPA to the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. It is known officially as the Gibraltar Bay Unit. The Conservancy continues to serve as stewards of the site today by doing habitat improvement work, hosting environmental education nature walks and opening the site on Sundays for public access.



GINLC President Doug Thiel

On a related note, U.S. Representative John D. Dingell stopped by the board meeting on April 11 to personally congratulate the Conservancy on its selection as the 2012 John D. Dingell "Friend of the Refuge" Award. The Congressman noted that the addition of the Gibraltar Bay Unit to the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge would not have been possible without the assistance of the Conservancy.

Thorofare Canal Lot Project

Work was started in April on a two-year project to create a more aesthetically pleasing and ecologically diverse property owned by GINLC on Thorofare which borders the Thorofare Canal. Hundreds of hours of volunteer time have been spent on planting and upgrading the property. A detailed report on this project can be found on page two of this newsletter.

Gibraltar Bay Kayak Event

On Sunday, June 10, GINLC sponsored *Kayak Gibraltar Bay* which involved four guided kayaking tours around the southern area of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. A total of 100 kayakers took part in the tours, and by all reports, it was a tremendous success. See page 4 and 5 for details.

Landscape for Learning

A very interesting and ambitious plan has been developed to create an outdoor environmental and earth



continued on page 8

**Gibraltar Bay Unit
Detroit River
International Wildlife
Refuge/Nature Area**
Open Sundays 1-4PM
through October 28

**Good Night, Marsh
REFUGE / NATURE AREA**
Saturday, July 14
7-8:30PM

**Water, Water
Everywhere!
REFUGE / NATURE AREA**
Sunday, July 29
1-4PM

**Lovely Lotus
REFUGE / NATURE AREA**
Sunday, August 12
1-4PM

**Autumn
Interpretive
Walks—TBA**

**Looking ahead
Annual Meeting**
November 10
10- 11:30AM
CENTENNIAL FARM

NATURAL BEAUTY—IN ABUNDANCE by Ken Tilp

Each year the Conservancy takes on a major project and this year it was the Kobiljak-donated property on Thorofare, just north of Highland Dr. The goal was multi-faceted: to create an aesthetically pleasing and ecologically diverse property; to enhance the recreational use of the property for wildlife viewing; to provide access to the Thorofare Canal; and to reduce maintenance costs.

Lisa Appel, a natural landscape design specialist, worked with GINLC to develop a plan that included a wooded area, a woodland edge, a butterfly meadow and a shoreline area.

14 Red Maples, 4 Redbuds, 3 Tulip Poplars, 1 Serviceberry and 5 Prickly Ash were planted April 7 through the generous efforts of board members and volunteers. The weather was perfect and the soil still moist and unusually workable. Woodchips were also placed around the plantings to conserve moisture and moderate soil temps. Three hours later, the makings of a blazing red fall spectacle were in place.

April 28 found volunteers facing a more daunting task. 8 Douglas Fir and 15 Black Spruce, with root balls weighing over 150 lbs. and requiring much deeper holes than the deciduous trees, were gently rolled into ground that in some spots seemed impenetrable—Grosse Ile clay. A cold, wet, cloudy day turned out to be

just cool enough to aid the work of digging. Three hours later two rows of pines bordered the north and south sides of the lot.

Mid-May saw the planting of a couple dozen understory wild flower plants, including wild geranium, Solomon's Seal, ferns and others, along the south woodland edge of the property. In mid-June 6 Spicebush, 1 Button Bush,

2 Serviceberry, 4 Joe Pyeweed and a half dozen wild flowers completed this year's plantings.

Westcroft Gardens facilitated the purchase of the maple trees, the pines and the large bushes. The understory wild flower plantings were from Cranbrook Gardens, nurtured through the winter by John Leon.

Plans are in place to develop the Butterfly Meadow, add plantings to the Woodland Edge and the Shoreline Buffer in Spring 2013.

The following GINLC board members and volunteers have generously given time, talent and muscle to create what will be a wonderful asset for the community: Aaron Bickel, Eric Michael, Doug and Cari Thiel, John Leon, Victoria and Ellen Murphy, Fred Pepper, Ron Schmaeman, Ken Tilp, Ingo Hasserodt, Paul Gloor, Jo-Anne Gronlund, Keith Zook, Pete Rock and Jeff Groulx.

While the wet spring was great for the plantings, the later dry weather has made regular watering a necessity, and we offer a very big thanks to our southern neighbor, Charles Tourner, for so generously allowing us to use his water. A couple hundred feet of hose allows us to reach to the two ends of the 400 foot deep lot.

Plan to stop by and walk the length of the property and enjoy the makings of what will be an outstanding example of natural settings that make Grosse Ile such a special place.



Aaron Bickel (l) and Fred Pepper were among those who generously gave of their time and expertise to plant trees.

Cypress mulch by Ingo Hasserodt

A recent article in a national newspaper reported on the massive removal, including clear cutting of cypress tree forests in the American South East, particularly Louisiana.

The trees are shredded into cypress mulch to be sold nation wide in garden stores.

The paper urged it's readers not to support this environmentally destructive activity by not purchasing cypress mulch. Although several national retailers have stopped selling cypress mulch, I noticed in a local flier that it is still on the market.

Cypress trees are the main defense against erosion and hurricane damage particularly in the Mississippi River Delta.

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

BY Ken Tilp

True to its mission statement, on March 31, in weather perfect for some vigorous work, Conservancy board members and volunteers headed out for its annual property clean-up in conjunction with the Island Clean-Up.

The major focus was at the Kobiljak-donated property on Thorofare, just north of Highland Dr. A dozen volunteers—men and women—hand carried heavy buckets-full of bricks and broken concrete from the shoreline of the Canal up the fairly steep hill to a pick-up truck waiting at the road side, a nearly 400-foot trek. Grosse Ile High School students Aaron Bickel, Alex Athens and Mike Cantley contributed by ferrying wheelbarrows heavy with bricks and concrete to the road. The bricks had been dumped over time at the shoreline by goodness knows who. Four pick-up loads were needed to remove the unnatural and unsightly mess from the water's edge. The Canal shoreline now presents a natural look.

Rusty metal posts, with concrete attached, were removed from the GINLC lot on Coleman by volunteer Scott Aston. Later this spring a pick-up load of asphalt and broken concrete was also removed. There is a huge pile of asphalt and broken concrete, apparently dumped over the hill by a construction company in years past, yet to be removed. It will require a major effort.

The normally large accumulation of discarded water bottles, other beverage containers and assorted trash was picked from the Gray's drive property that abuts the drug store on Macomb. A lesser effort was required on the Ryder-donated property located at the intersection of Lakewood and Balmoral. A collection of plastic bottles and golf balls was removed from the Morse-donated property on Gregory.

The Detroit River did its usual job of carrying everything from tires, glass bottles, plastic containers ranging from bleach jugs to water bottles, drift wood and an endless assortment of other refuse and depositing it on the banks of the BASF/Wackman-donated property on northern Meridian Road. Thanks to our removal of phragmites and a major clean-up effort in the prior year the task was manageable.

All of this good work is due to the generous efforts of our volunteers and board members. We can't thank them enough for their caring and concern that are coupled with their good work. Thank you to Jo-Anne Gronlund, Ingo Hasserodt, Eric Michael, Victoria Murphy, Fred Pepper, Doug and Cari Thiel, Bert Urbani, John Leon and Liz Hugel.



Annual Monitoring Report

by Fred Pepper

The Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy stewards over 200 acres of property and easements on Grosse Ile and in Flat Rock. Each year, a committee visits the properties and collects data which is then used to create management plans. The committee photographs the properties and determines if they need surveys, signs, invasive species controls, litter removal, tree removal, tree and vegetation plantings, etc. They also note unauthorized encroachments and dumping on our properties.

This year our committee members were Doug Thiel, Jo-Anne Gronlund, Paul Gloor, and Fred Pepper.

If you are interested in volunteering for this activity, please contact any board member and we will include you in our visitation group for next year. The visits provide not only an education about our properties but also an opportunity for a pleasant walk in nature.

KAYAK GIBRALTAR BAY 2012

by Paul Gloor

Photographs by Art Payette and Paul Gloor.

June 10, 2012 was the first *Kayak Gibraltar Bay* event. The GINLC event was sponsored by the Friends of the Detroit River in partnership with Riverside Kayak Connection, LLC (RKC) of Wyandotte; Grosse Ile Municipal Airport; and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Four guided tours around parts of the “conservation crescent” surrounding the southern end of Grosse Ile were conducted. The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge units within this crescent include: Gibraltar Bay Unit, Sugar Island Unit, Calf Island Unit, Humbug Marsh Unit, and Lake Erie Metropark Unit. These unique habitats serve as important stopovers for migratory birds and spawning and nursery sites for fish. The kayakers entered the Gibraltar Bay Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge on Grosse Ile (The EPA granted stewardship of the area to the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy) and then assembled on the adjacent airport property.

In addition to providing paddling tips to beginners, RKC handled the sign-up, supplied the rental kayaks and provided a safety orientation. Tours were also guided by interpreters. They were:

- David Howell – Chariman of the Friends of the Detroit River
- Natalie Ray - Interpretive Naturalist for the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy.
- Jamie Lanier - Visitor Services Manager, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge
- Husband-and-wife team John Leon and Bert (Roberta) Urbani, Grosse Ile residents and members of the GINLC. Bert also serves on the board of the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance and is a DTE Green Team member.



Kayak tours left from the old seaplane base (Grosse Ile Township Airport), past the American Lotus beds and headed either east or west. David Howell led a group from the airport, up Frenchman's Creek, past Swan Island and Calf island, to Humbug Island, returning to the airport by passing south of Round Island.

The second route went from the airport through Gibraltar bay, under the East River Road bridge, between Elba-Mar Boat Club and Elba Island into Elba Marsh. The route circled Elba marsh and returned to the airport.

Highlights of the tours were:

- The eagle's nest at Humbug Island, with a resident juvenile clearly visible in the nest to all of our paddlers and the sighting of an immature Bald Eagle flying overhead as the kayakers headed back to the launch site.
- Multiple sightings of great blue Heron, great egrets, black-crowned night heron, red wing black bird and common terns
- Invasive Phragmites juxtaposed with native cattails
- Sunning turtles and swimming muskrats



The abundance of wildlife was worth a thousand words. Their presence demonstrated the successful co-existence of wildlife and humans in the Downriver area and the environmental progress that has been accomplished.

The original plan to have three tours limited to 20 paddlers each changed when Eric Sharp wrote about the event in the Detroit Free Press (May 22). The three tours sold out in less than one week, and a fourth tour was added. It sold out in one day, with participants from all over! A number of them came from Bloomfield Hills, Grosse Pointe, Westland, Rochester, Livonia, Plymouth, as well as Downriver. They all left with a great impression. It was great to have so many people from other parts of metro Detroit visiting Grosse Ile and seeing many things that were new and unfamiliar.

Worries that the river wouldn't be clean, or the current would be too strong, or that they might encounter heavy boat traffic were soon eased as our paddlers found cool water as clear as many northern lakes.



A good number of local people saw the kayak signs and came to just walk the trails at the refuge and check out the event at the airport.

Approximately 35 volunteers contributed their time and energy to make this possible. Our volunteers handled registration, orchestrated the parking, assisted with loading and unloading kayaks, tended information tables, provided directional signs and generally tried to make it a pleasant day for our guests. Six of our volunteers were from the DTE Green Team comprised of DTE Energy employees, retirees, family members and friends who volunteer their time to work on environmentally related projects on company property or in the communities DTE serves.

Thanks to our partners, volunteers, and Mother Nature for providing good weather to make this event a huge success. We put over 100 paddlers on the river between 11AM and 5PM to show off the lower Detroit River, characterized by Eric Sharp as, "one of the best urban paddling areas in the country."

Some of the following comments were given by the kayakers when they left the nature area.

They expressed a need for a kudos box for future expressions like this:

"Exceeded my expectations"

"Wouldn't change a thing"

"Had a fantastic time"

"Price is right"

"Perfect"

"Hope to see it again next year"

*Generous Donations
were received from*

**Liz Hugel & Manfred Egerer
Grosse Ile Bridge Company**

in Memory of Bruce D. Jones

A HUGE THANK YOU

Thank you Scott Aston.

This spring Scott accomplished single handed (except for the companionship of his dog) what would have ordinarily taken a committee to do. He removed 16 tires from the north end of the Hennepin Marsh property. He also removed five bags of trash and enough plastic to fill three more garbage bags.

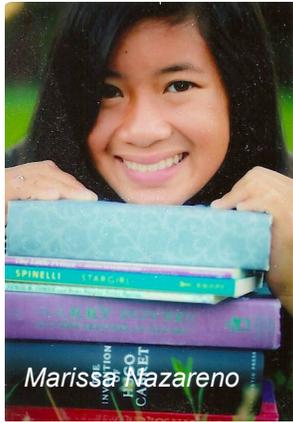
Scott also took on the project of removing metal fence posts from GINLC property at Coleman and Brook Circle.

It just takes one person with a mission to help our natural environment to improve things for the benefit of all of us.

Thanks, Scott!

GINLC SCHOLARSHIP IN HONOR OF BRUCE JONES

The inaugural Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy Scholarship, in honor of Dr. Bruce Jones, was awarded on May 24 to Marissa Nazareno, one of the Valedictorians of the class of 2012. Dr. Jones, a founding member of the Conservancy, had a passion for environmental education. He was frequently involved not only in Grosse Ile schools, but many area educational opportunities. In conversation, he frequently emphasized the need to get children outside, and in one of his final projects he championed the learning garden at Parke Lane Elementary. It therefore seemed very appropriate to recognize Bruce's contributions to the Conservancy and this community with a scholarship.



Grosse Ile High School students were invited to apply, and we received seven applications this first year. All applicants demonstrated great qualifications and interest, in response to the request to describe their efforts in protecting or enhancing the natural environment and how they planned to continue to do so through their education.

Ms. Nazareno distinguished herself by more than her academic record. She volunteered through the EPA's Youth Conservation Corps, and as part of that effort, worked at

the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (another of Bruce's passions). As a leader in the high school Science Club, Marissa worked on the club's recycling program. The scholarship review committee especially enjoyed her acknowledgement that she "nags" her peers to recycle.

Ms. Nazareno will enroll in the fall in the Honors Program in the University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. She intends to obtain a biology degree in an interdisciplinary manner, and hopes to help people become actively involved in their health and the environment.

We thank all the students who applied for the scholarship, and appreciate all their efforts on behalf of the environment. If you know any rising seniors who have been active in protecting or enhancing the environment, please make sure they are aware of the scholarship and encourage them to apply next year!

BUCKTHORN

by Aaron Bickel

Why are the leaves on that shrub still green well into fall? It's spring and that shrub still has purplish black berries?

If you ever asked yourself these questions, then chances are you may have buckthorn growing on your property.

There are two exotic species of buckthorn in Michigan—Common Buckthorn (*R. cathartica*) and Glossy Buckthorn (*R. frangula*). Common Buckthorn tends to grow in and around wetlands. It prefers lightly shaded conditions but is tolerant of many soil types. Glossy Buckthorn has a bit stronger preference for upland soils.



Why is buckthorn a problem?

Buckthorn is an invasive shrub or tree originating in Europe that was introduced to the United States as an ornamental plant. Buckthorn is an invasive species and is harmful because it creates a dense understory canopy which competes with native plants, degrades wildlife habitat and serves as a host to other pests such as the soybean aphid and rust fungus. Also by shading out other plants on the forest floor, Buckthorn contributes to erosion.

Buckthorn is often found in hedgerows and along forest edges. Here's how to identify it for removal from your landscape:

How do you identify Buckthorn?

Appearance: Shrub or small tree reaching up to 25' in height. Crown irregularly shaped. Multiple stems at base.

Leaves: Oval or rounded with pointed tip. Margins finely-toothed. 3-5 pair upward-curved veins. Glossy and smooth. Hairless on top and bottom.

Branches: Buds and leaves are opposite. End in short, sharp spines.

Bark: Rough. Grey to brown with light-colored lenticels.

Wood: Inner bark yellow and heartwood orange or pink.

Flowers: Dense clusters of 4-petaled, yellow-green flowers in spring.

Fruit: Large, black berries. Ripen in fall.

For more on buckthorn or to participate in a mapping study visit "Buckthorn Watch" (<http://buckthornwatch.org>), a citizen science program established by Ohio State University, Michigan State University and Iowa State University to map, study and manage this fast-growing shrub.

Source: Michigan State University Extension News, September 24, 2010.

EDUCATION AT THE REFUGE

by Courtney Solenberger-McNeill

GINLC's Educational Programs were in full swing again starting this spring. Under the direction of our nature interpreter Natalie Ray, many families, friends, community members, and people who wanted to enjoy our beautiful state of Michigan, Grosse Ile, and the day ventured to the Wildlife Refuge Open Houses. In addition to Sunday afternoon openings at the Refuge, GINLC organized three educational events that began on Sunday, May 6, with a guided nature walk. Participants enjoyed a beautiful day as Natalie Ray guided them along paths to watch birds in flight, examine natural wildflower growth, and discuss what to expect from "Mother Nature." A guided bird watch took place on Saturday May 19.

Spring events culminated with the *Kayak Gibraltar Bay* tour facilitated with Riverside Kayak Connection on Sunday June 10. See pages 4 and 5 for more on this event.

Upcoming Education events:

Saturday, July 14, 2012 - 7-8:30PM, Goodnight Marsh!
As the sun goes down, daytime animals "tuck in" for the night, while the nighttime animals are just getting started! Join us for a summer evening hike to learn about these fascinating creatures.

Sunday, July 29, 2012- 1-3:00PM, Water, Water Everywhere!
Join us for a day of all things bright and beautiful in the water. Learn about water plants, water animals, and water conservation. Play some fun water games!

Sunday, August 12, 2012 - 1-2:30PM, Lovely Lotus
Take a walk down to the American Lotus bed to learn the rich natural and cultural history behind this beautiful flower.

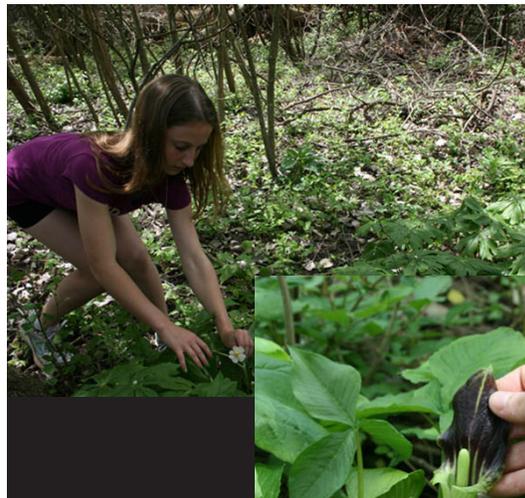
Birds, Buds and Blooms Program tour is led by Natalie Ray, nature interpreter



Refuge visitor examines a Baltimore Oriole nest.



From the Birds, Buds, and Blooms Program—Spring arrived and we went out in search of the "cats", "umbrellas", and the "glass of orange juice" that call the refuge home.



Finding flowers of the may-apples, the "umbrellas"



Jack-in-the-pulpit was found on the wildflower trail

Photos from the May 19 Guided Bird Watch at the Refuge



sciences classroom for middle school students in the area of a largely unused courtyard at the Grosse Ile Middle School. The project will utilize Michigan native plants and will have a wetland component to it. A grant application has been prepared and submitted to Ford Motor Company to assist with funding and provide additional volunteer support. Look for more detailed information on this project in our next newsletter.

GINLC/Bruce Jones Scholarship

Our first annual GINLC/Bruce Jones Memorial Scholarship was presented by Pat Selby (GINLC Vice-President) during the Grosse Ile High School Scholarship Award Ceremony on May 24th. See page 6 for more details.

Special Guest at June GINLC Board Meeting

Julie Stoneman, Associate Director for *The Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy* was a special guest at our June Board Meeting. *The Heart of the Lakes* was founded by Michigan's Land Conservancies to serve as a collective land conservation policy voice in Michigan. In addition, it provides valuable technical training to Conservancy members statewide. There are 24 Conservancy organizations that are members of the *Heart of the*

Lakes, which cover all geographic areas of the state and have protected over 500,000 acres of ecologically valuable land throughout Michigan. For more information check out their very interesting website @ www.heartofthelakes.org

Update on BASF Lots Project

A MDEQ permit has been submitted to allow GINLC to complete a walking path, boardwalk and wildlife observation deck overlooking the Hennepin Marsh on the Detroit River which will provide the public with an excellent wildlife viewing opportunity. Look for more information on this project in our Fall newsletter.

We have been very busy during the first half of the year. As always, all of our projects, events and stewardship activities are completed by hard working volunteers. Since all of our work is completed by volunteers, essentially 100% of your membership contributions go directly into activities that improve the quality of life on Grosse Ile.

Thank you for your continuing support and trust in our organization! If you have any questions or comments please contact me at (734) 255-0957.

To receive event notices and newsletters by email, contact us at info@ginlc.org



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