



FALL, 2004

VOL. 12 NO. 2

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 16

9:00AM

WORK DAY

November 6

ANNUAL
MEETING

10:00AM

CENTENNIAL FARM
MEMBERS & THE PUBLIC

November 13

9:00AM

WORK DAY

the VOYAGEUR

the newsletter of the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy

*"Never doubt that the work of 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

A Lower River Renaissance

Don't Rebuild—Re-Imagine

by Bruce Jones

While glancing through a bunch of dull magazines in a medical office waiting room recently, I came across the following quote by Ray Bradbury (an unknown to me).

"You've got to jump off cliffs all the time and find your wings on the way down."

I was struck by how well this quote fits our Conservancy and how rapidly and in so many different subjects, we are "finding our wings." In multiple ways, the GINLC is contributing to a wonderful quality of life for present and future residents.

A good example occurred on July 22.

Last year, as part of our Gibraltar Bay Initiative, we reconstructed about 280 feet of devastated shoreline on the southwest side of the Grosse Ile Nature Area. Due to time constraints, the only site preparation we were able to do prior to reconstruction was burning a small patch of the highly invasive phragmites. The restoration is very successful with the native plants now providing beautiful splashes of color along with natural wetland habitat.

But this year, the phragmites is back with a vengeance. So is Canada thistle, an insignificant plant last year but now a large area loaded with seed and with many little ones sprouting. In our woods, common and glossy buckthorn are rapidly increasing. We realized we did not have the knowledge to manage these invasives.

So, we followed our traditional Conservancy philosophy of "if we don't know, ask the experts."

On the 22nd, we hosted a meeting involving 7 different organizations and agencies involved in managing invasive species. Included were representatives from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Michigan DNR and Wayne County. Art Koester and Cliff St. Pierre represented the Township because phragmites is rapidly taking over our roadsides and Canada thistle is devastating several roadside areas including the area around the Macomb observation deck.

The result—a much greater knowledge and a keener appreciation of the tragic role invasive plants are playing in our environment and a clearer direction for trying to manage them. As invasives are an island-wide problem, there will be much more on them in the future as a protocol and partnerships develop and the entire community becomes aware of invasive plant management.

On July 13, D'Agostini and Sons, a contractor for the Township's storm water sewer project, graciously

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MONARCH BUTTERFLY (DANAUS PLEXIPPUS)

by Marilyn Dexheimer

Over the summer many native plants have been added to the nature area. A number of them will hopefully attract butterflies. Last summer several monarch caterpillars and butterflies were released there in hopes they would breed and appear back this summer.

The Monarch is a butterfly most people can recognize on sight, yet what is not commonly known is that it is a poisonous butterfly. It gets that way because the eggs are laid on the milkweed plant and the caterpillars (larval stage) eat the leaves of the plant. Milkweed has toxins (cardenolide glycosides) that the caterpillar ingests while eating the leaves. This makes the butterfly taste bitter to would-be predators.

Monarchs begin as an egg that looks like it is from the movie *Alien*. It is spherical, with vertical ridges, found on the underside of milkweed. When they first hatch they resemble little pieces of black wire that are alive. The eggshell becomes the caterpillar's first meal. During the larval stage the caterpillar molts its skin 4 times. The caterpillars have bands of white, black and yellow stripes. There are 2 pairs of black sensory tentacles on the head and a smaller pair on the other end. They have eight pairs of legs: three pairs at the head end (thoracic legs) and five pairs at the back end of prolegs. The prolegs disappear during the pupal stage.

The caterpillars grow to about 2 inches, then stops eating and attaches itself to a branch using the small hooks on the last pair of legs at the rear end, the anal prolegs. The legs look like clamps. Using its spinneret, it spins silk to secure the anal prolegs to the branch. Then, hanging with its head upside down it molts one more time and the newly exposed skin dries and hardens. The result is a beautiful spring green chrysalis with rows of metallic gold spots. It is truly a jewel of nature. It takes about 2 weeks for the caterpillars to turn into butterflies. First, the cocoon turns transparent and you can see the butterfly with its wings neatly folded up inside the cocoon. It is really amazing to see. The adult emerges from the cocoon with its wings still folded. It hangs upside down for a bit and then starts pumping liquid into the wing veins so they will inflate and unfold. Until the wings dry the butterfly is vulnerable to predators.

At this stage all of the growing of the Monarch is completed. It has a digestive system unlike some butterflies and sips liquid food through its proboscis—a long, flexible "tongue" —which is coiled under its mouth and uncoils to drink nectar. Nectar they like commonly comes from milkweed, dogbane, lilacs, marjoram, red clover, thistle, lantana, zinnias, coneflowers, goldenrod, butterfly bush,

and bee balm. These are good plants to have in the garden to attract butterflies and hummingbirds. The male monarch has scent spots on the lower wing. These spots release a pheromone to attract females.



How long a Monarch butterfly lives depends on the season in which it emerged from the pupa and whether or not it belongs to a migratory group of Monarchs. Adults that emerged in early summer have the

shortest life spans and live for about five weeks. Those that emerged in late summer, the migratory Monarchs, migrate south and survive over the winter months. Their life span is about 8-9 months. This adult will continue the cycle by reproducing. Females lay their eggs along the migratory route. This migration takes up to three generations of Monarchs to complete, so some Monarchs stay in one area their entire lives and others migrate south. Groups of butterflies are referred to as swarms or rabbles.

There are "butterfly" trees in Canada at Point Pelee. As the butterflies get ready to migrate south in the fall they flock or swarm together like birds. The trees become covered with Monarchs and are a beautiful sight. It is definitely worth the trip. Their web site is parkscanada.pch.gc.ca.

See www-ed.fnal.gov/entry_exhibits/insects/monarch/html for more information on the Monarch butterfly

Did you Know...?

Items borrowed from Wildflowers of Michigan Field Guide by Stan Tekiela

★ *Spotted Touch-Me-Not (Impatiens capensis)*

Height: 3-5 ft. Flowers: orange, 1" long covered with reddish brown spots. Annual, native.

Stan's Notes: Also called Jewelweed. Its stems are nearly translucent and contain a slippery juice that can be used to soothe the sting from nettles or poison ivy. Its long ripe seedpods explode when touched, throwing seeds in all directions.

★ *Great Blue Lobelia (lobelia siphilitica)*

Family; Bellflower (campanulaceae)

Height: 1-4 ft. Flower: many bright blue flowers, 1" wide, on a tall leafy stem, 6-12" long. Perennial, native.

Stan's Notes: Great Lobelia is similar to the Cardinal Flower, but it has blue flowers instead of red flowers. Attracts hummingbirds for pollination. The species name siphilitica comes from the mistaken belief that the alkaloids in the root can cure syphilis. Actually, however, the alkaloids can cause vomiting. The genus name Lobelia honors Flemish botanist Matthias de Lobel (1538-1616)

Editors' note:

The "Did You Know?" series continues in upcoming newsletters.

PLANTS DONATED TO NATURE AREA ENTRANCE

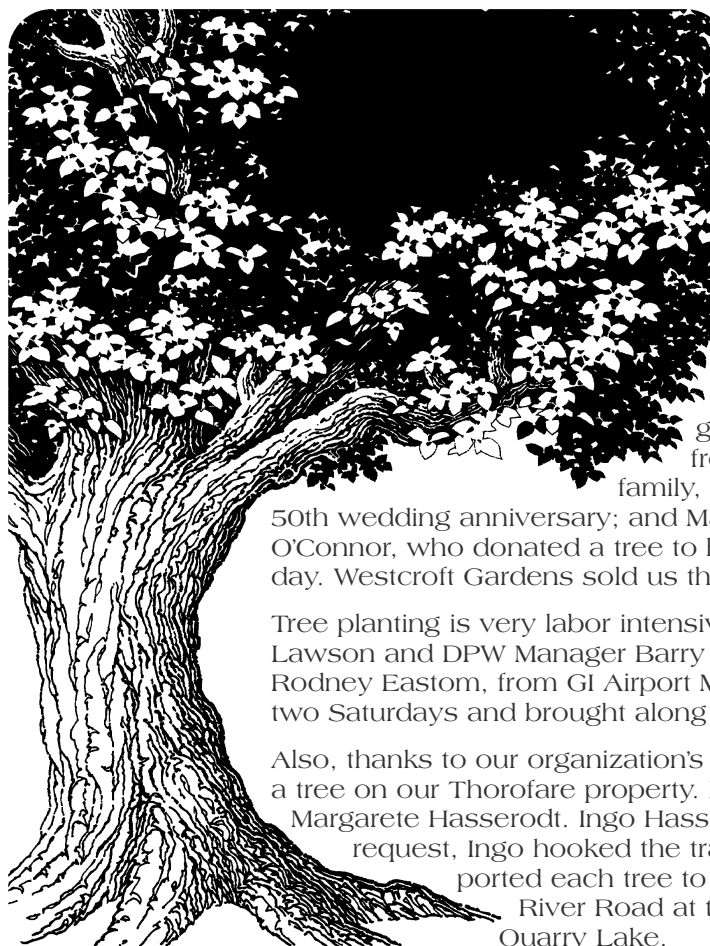
by Margarete Hasserodt

Thanks to Hannelore Hughes who parted with four Cup Plants (*silphium perfoliatum*) from her beautiful garden. She personally replanted them at the entrance of the Nature Area, two each on the far north and south sides, behind the large rear rocks. This plant belongs to the Daisy family, sunflower tribe. The large stalks (3-8 ft tall) display bright yellow flowers. Leaves fan out and form cups that hold water and provide perches. Seeds are important to wildlife. Blooms July – September. Most important, the rabbits and deer haven't touched them yet!

SAND HILL AT NATURE AREA GETS A NAME

by Margarete Hasserodt

The Thursday group of summer campers at BUILDING BLOCKS LEARNING CENTER on Macomb Street, ages 6-11, assisted the GINLC to find a name for the sand hill near the parking lot. This year two turtle nests were located there, but not disturbed. Summer camp Director Ms. Jamie Rose explained to the children the importance of good nesting areas for turtles and how the hatchlings need to be protected from predators and obstructions. The children discussed various options and decided on naming the hill "TURTLE EGG HILL." A sign was made and installed by Margarete Hasserodt. Please stop by and see for yourself.



ARBOR DAY – A SUCCESS

by Margarete Hasserodt

The GINLC's goal to plant Eastern Redbud (*cercis canadensis*) trees to celebrate Arbor Day during the next few years, was fulfilled this year. Thanks to the donations we received, we were able to buy and plant five trees. We all remember the rainy month of May and so the anticipated spring planting was completed between heavy rains and in soggy soil.

We accomplished this task with the help of many generous people. The financial assistance came from: The Grosse Ile Rotary Club; the Hugel/Egerer family, who donated a tree to honor Liz Hugel's parents

50th wedding anniversary; and Max and Olivia Robinson, Ursula and Kiernan O'Connor, who donated a tree to honor their "Oma" Margarete Hasserodt's 65th birthday. Westcroft Gardens sold us the trees at the lowest possible cost.

Tree planting is very labor intensive. Grosse Ile Township Airport Manager John Lawson and DPW Manager Barry Sedlock, had no objections when we asked for help. Rodney Eastom, from GI Airport Maintenance, and Jon Keim, from DPW, helped us on two Saturdays and brought along a few Community Service workers with shovels.

Also, thanks to our organization's president Bruce Jones, who participated by planting a tree on our Thorofare property. Bruce was applauded by his wife Joan and Ingo and Margarete Hasserodt. Ingo Hasserodt, was the man we needed every time. On request, Ingo hooked the trailer up to his trusty Ford Crown Victoria and transported each tree to its location at Thorofare, Grays Drive, Meridian, East River Road at the Nature Area entrance, and inside in front of Quarry Lake. WE SINCERELY THANK YOU ALL!

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President's Message, continued from page 1

distributed six 3-7 ton boulders among our different schools. These are boulders that were found in the excavation of the new sewer water holding tank on West River Road and are remnants from the last glacial retreat. Each cluster of boulders will become an outdoor classroom and have native species landscaping around them along with an interpretive sign. Several years ago, John Zawiske, geologist for Cranbrook Institute of Science, told us "Every rock has a story to tell." Our challenge now is to learn each rock's story and then how to tell their stories along with a geological history of our river to our school children and to our community. This is another interesting facet of our "Landscape for Learning" project.

On July 9, we hosted "Destination Saturn" at the Centennial Farm. This was a spur-of-the-moment decision that arose from conversations with Jeff Driscoll, an excellent amateur astronomer who has a 20 reflective telescope plus several smaller ones. We were exploring ways of incorporating hands-on experiences in astronomy for our school kids when Jeff mentioned the Cassini mission to Saturn. We decided to jump off the cliff and, in spite of less than a week for publicity, we had almost 50 people at the session. By this fall, we hope to provide practical, hands-on telescope experiences that are coordinated with our school systems units on

astronomy—another facet in our "Landscape for Learning" project.

Sandwiched in between all this, we were generously given a parcel of magnificent woods near Meridian and Jack Taylor has donated 2 lots along the canal in Grosse Ile Manor subdivision.

And finally, we have water transportation! Adam Bickel has generously donated a 16 foot aluminum canoe to the GINLC. This ends the frustration of being dependent upon others to provide transportation for our water and shore observations and work projects. It also led to our hosting a public information session on paddle boats on July 28 at the Township Hall.

With all this activity, probably the most gratifying aspect has been the rapid increase in the number of people visiting the Nature Area. Truly, we are learning the wisdom of Ralph Waldo Emerson who wrote:

"In the woods, we return to reason and faith." ★

Getting it Right

In the last edition of *the Voyageur*, it should have been noted that the author of the Arbor Day article was Margarete Hasserodt. The accompanying photo was taken by Barbara Leeper.

"Go where there is no trail and leave a path of clarity for others to follow."

—Dorothy Corbille Briggs

To join the Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy
call Laura Plischke 734.676.3046.
To make a donation to the Conservancy
call Peter Rock 734.675.3297
To sign up for a work party
call Fred Pepper 734.692.0517

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