



the VOYAGEUR

VOLUME 21 • NUMBER 3

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GROSSE ILE NATURE & LAND CONSERVANCY

FALL 2013

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." William Shakespeare

FALL EVENTS

ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday,
Nov. 2
10 a.m.- 12 noon
Centennial Farm

PRESENTATION

Tammy Travis-Taylor
President
Grosse Ile Historical
Society

KIDS' DISCOVERY

OWL PROWL
Centennial Farm
Saturday, Nov. 2
7 p.m.

Registration Required
734-624-7993

WINTER BIRDS OF WESTCROFT GARDENS

Saturday,
Dec. 7
10 a.m.



Monroe Spark's mother flies overhead as an Osprey Watch of Southeast Michigan member climbs the pole to retrieve the chick for banding.

Native Species on Grosse Ile: Osprey (*Pandion Haliaetus*)

BY BERT URBANI

CHARACTERISTICS

The Osprey is a large bird of prey, 2 feet in length, with 6-foot wing span. It is also called a fish hawk, because of its predominantly fish diet. It hunts during the day. The Osprey is mostly brown on its back, with a white head and underparts, and a dark mask around the eyes reaching back to the ears. Females and males look alike, but the female is larger, as in most raptors. The eyes are golden and the bill is black. The Osprey's feet are particularly interesting, having small Velcro®-like hooks on the bottom to help with the snagging of fish. Like some owls, Osprey can reverse one toe to improve its ability to grab prey with two toes in front and two in back.

Just before striking the water, the Osprey rears up and plunges feet first into the water to grab its prey.

RANGE

Ospreys are found on every continent except Antarctica, and as non-breeding migrants in South America.

HABITAT

Ospreys choose habitats near water. They will nest in trees or on a variety of platforms, including utility poles and cell towers, up to 100 feet high.

DIET

The Osprey diet consists almost entirely of fish, but some sources say they will occasionally eat rodents, rabbits, small amphibians, and other birds. Their vision is acute and they are able to spot prey underwater from a height of 30 – 130 feet above the water. An Osprey will hover over a spot then fold its wings and dive headfirst towards its target. Just before striking the water, the Osprey rears up and plunges feet first into the water to grab its prey.

LIFE CYCLE

Osprey generally mate for life, and become

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"Meditate often upon the bond of all in the Universe and their mutual relationship. For all things are in a way woven together." - Marcus Aurelius

From President Liz Hugel

After reviewing articles submitted for our last newsletter, our GINLC director Bert Urbani sent me this quote and commented, "As conservationists, we know that all things are interconnected. These interconnections show up in many ways, in relationships that span the Atlantic Ocean, disparate legislative actions that result in species survival, and casual meetings with big results." It is striking how our CONNECTIONS and BONDS with friends, acquaintances and nature have resulted in such a successful year with so much accomplished by your Conservancy on Grosse Ile. Many thanks go to all of our board members for their efforts. Personally, I am especially grateful for the new board members who quickly and without hesitation stepped up and took leadership roles to make things happen in their very first year on the board. Of course, as always, we're not done, there's still a lot to do and our list is long. We hope to see you at our Annual Meeting! We'll share with you some of the details of our 2013

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projects and show you what we have in store for next year. We're also delighted that Tammy Taylor, one of our local historians, will be our guest speaker.

BRUCE JONES MEMORIAL

It's now two years since the passing of Dr. Bruce Jones, founding member and first GINLC President. Although we quickly established the GINLC Scholarship Award and the Environmental Award programs, both in memory of Bruce, we

still wanted a physical memorial. As we debated different locations and designs the "opportunity" arose to assist Grosse Ile Township in a major way with the landscaping at the small Waterfront Park on East River Rd. As planning progressed and a lot of GINLC effort was directed to the site, the board decided to request placement of the memorial at that location, which fittingly looks out towards Stony Island, which Bruce worked for years to preserve. As the largest undeveloped island in the area, it is the northeastern tip of the Conservation Crescent that extends around the southern end of Grosse Ile. A wildlife spotting scope has been purchased as part of the memorial. As we go to press with our newsletter we await township board approval for placement of the memorial at the park. We thank the Grosse Ile Rotary and the Township Recreation Commission for their support and approval of our plan so far.

OBSERVATION DECK AT THE HENNEPIN MARSH GATEWAY PRESERVE

Other business to note is that GINLC has received township approval for construction of the observation deck to be constructed at our Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve on Meridian overlooking the Trenton Channel. eConstruction will be delayed until 2014 as we complete other projects and await donation of construction materials.

STEWARDSHIP

Activities are continuing through the Fall season with trees being planted as part of the DNR/DTE Energy Foundation grant that we received. Although the refuge was shut down during the partial government shutdown, once they're back to business, Art Payette will continue to lead stewardship activities there on Monday mornings, through fall and winter, weather permitting. CONNECT with us by phone or email if you can help!

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Our fall membership drive is underway! As we celebrate 20 years of making a difference on Grosse Ile, please join with us and support our programs. As a grass roots organization we rely on volunteer efforts and support of the community. It is only with a strong membership foundation that we can accomplish the good things we do to make Grosse Ile a great place to live!



Continued from Page 1

sexually mature at three to four years of age. The male usually chooses the nest site and brings his mate back with him from their winter home (Southern U.S. states or Central or South America). The female lays two to four white and reddish brown eggs and incubates them for approximately five weeks. Chicks are well cared for by both parents, and fledge in 8-10 weeks. The life span of an Osprey is 7-10 years, but the oldest recorded wild European Osprey lived for more than 30 years.

BEHAVIOR

Osprey are among the species that are showing dramatic signs of recovery in the post-DDT world. DDT was implicated in the near extinction of many species of raptors including Bald Eagles, due to the bioaccumulation in the food chain, with the most deleterious impacts on the top predators such as eagles and Osprey.

VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES ON GROSSE ILE:

Osprey can be seen from the shorelines of Grosse Ile, especially near Sugar Island, where they have been observed diving for fish. Local Osprey nests were observed this year on a cell tower on W. Jefferson south of Vreeland Road and in Estral Beach, at the intersection of Port Sunlight and Masserant Roads at the Strong Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. The male at the Strong Unit nest was named "Monroe Spark" and was



Monroe Spark is gently handled by a Detroit Zoo veterinarian during an examination prior to being banded and fitted with a radio transmitter.

one of three Osprey male chicks to be banded and fitted with a radio transmitter by the Osprey Watch of Southeast Michigan organization (with funding from DTE Energy Monroe Power Plant). As of this writing, Monroe Spark is in southern Florida. His whereabouts, as well as the other two Ospreys, can be tracked on the OWSEM website, www.owsem.org/index, along with other information about Ospreys and their increasing presence throughout southeast Michigan.

The increasing population of Osprey around Grosse Ile demonstrates the improvement of the environment, along with the recovery of Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and White Fish.

Great Lakes Water Levels

BY INGO HASSERODT

Boaters and freighter captains have been unhappy about the low Great Lakes water levels.

Is there any relief in sight? What causes it?

The answer lies mainly with the reduced ice coverage in recent years.

In the past, Lake Erie would freeze over, but now each winter large areas of the lake are only covered by drifting ice and all of it has melted by the end of March.

The initial cause is the increased air temperatures of global warming. But there is a magnifying effect in play. Whereas the ice cover of the lakes reduces evaporation from the water surface, the white of the snow covered ice reflects a large portion of the solar radiation.

A reduced ice cover on the other hand, not only permits evaporation, but the dark surface of the increased open water surface absorbs more solar radiation and increases the temperature of the water, further increasing evaporation. Surveys have found that the water temperature of the lakes have increased more in recent years than the air temperatures. Just another domino effect! Fortunately, Lake Erie has recovered somewhat this year, thanks to abundant rainfall. Hopefully, increasing air temperatures will also increase the flow of moisture from the Gulf of Mexico to maintain adequate water levels of at least Lake Erie.

Only time will tell.

Our Summer Nature Programs

BY NATALIE RAY

After a wonderful start to our educational programming this year, we continued to have great success, with many learning experiences! Summer programs began on July 20 with "All About Dragonflies." Sightings included many Green Darners hunting over the meadow, Blue Dashers competing for territory over the marsh, and lots of Bluet and Forktail Damselfies delicately perched along the trail. Although it was originally scheduled for July 14, "Wetland Wildlife" was postponed to July 28 due to severe weather. Nevertheless, wildlife was abounding. In addition to the usual Osprey, Great Blue Heron, and Eastern Kingbird, participants were able to get up close and personal with some of the lesser known marsh wildlife, such as the muskrat, mink, raccoon, and even the feared and misunderstood Common Snapping Turtle. We learned the importance of turtles in the marsh ecosystem and why we should not fear this marsh giant.

On August 3 we took a different perspective and observed many of the evening activities of the marsh as we walked along the airport road to the marsh overlook in the woods. One of our focus animals was the elusive Eastern Cottontail, who was out for an evening meal. We took the opportunity to view this animal from a scientific view, and discussed its adaptations as a prey species and compared those to the

adaptations of predator species, such as the coyote (or human!). The marsh was also busy with bird song and activity, and our evening ended with a few bats just getting started for the night.

We took our annual walk to the lovely lotus on August 11, and as always they were lovely! We stopped along the way to talk about some of the less conspicuous, yet equally important plants of the ecosystem such as Golden Alexanders, Common Elder, and Arrowhead. We discussed some of the ways in which Native Americans depended on the American Lotus for food, how the Lotus leaf structure is being studied as a model for technological advancement, and how our American Lotus compares to its bright pink cousin, the Asian Lotus.

Our last program for the summer was on September 8, which was a perfect time to look at insects. We certainly had no lack of insects, or kids excited about insects! We were practically tripping over Short-horned Grasshoppers, but we also found some of their less common cousins, the Long-horned Grasshoppers, as well as Field Crickets, Damselfies, and Bumble Bees. We also took some time to observe the large and beautiful Garden Spider (*Argiope* sp.), and we learned why a Daddy-Long-Legs is not a spider at all.



Please consider joining us for our last two programs of the year.

OWL PROWL
Saturday, Nov.
2, 7 p.m. @
Centennial Farm

After a short presentation on Michigan's owl species, we'll dissect some owl pellets and then take a walk to listen for whoooo is calling that night! Registration Required.

WINTER BIRDS OF WESTCROFT GARDENS
Sat., Dec. 7,
10 a.m. @
Westcroft
Gardens

Winter is a great time to see a whole new cast of characters in the bird world; join us to see what we can find this winter at Westcroft.

For more information or to register for programs contact Natalie Ray at 734-624-7993.





Education Committee

BY COURTNEY SOLENBERGER-MCNEIL

To kick off the start to the new school year, Barbara Thayer and I met twice in September with a local scout troop to learn about birds. The boys and their families enjoyed a beautiful hour at the refuge on a nature hike. In addition to the programs scheduled for later this year, the Education Committee has already started planning the program of events for 2014. We will sponsor the ever-popular Winter Walk at the Refuge with Natalie Ray as well an African

Safari evening with local photographer Jerry Jourdan for a winter respite. Another Toad & Frog program in the spring will be sponsored along with another birding class and several more interpretive walks. Look for the winter dates to be announced in the Ile Camera, on our website, Twitter and Facebook pages. The committee appreciates membership donations to offset the costs of the GINLC educational programs.

**DONATIONS
RECEIVED: OCT. 2012
TO SEPT. 2013**

BASF Corporation
Downriver Surgery Center
DTE Energy Foundation
Ford Motor Foundation
Grosse Ile Bridge Co.
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Grosse Ile Herb Society
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Our 2014 membership campaign is now underway and renewal letters are being mailed. If you appreciate our efforts to make this community a great place to live, please support us at whatever level is appropriate for you!

Donations received starting Oct 1st will be recorded as a 2014 membership.

If you prefer paperless transactions, you can donate at www.ginlc.org by clicking on the DONATE link and providing information securely through PayPal, for a small service fee charged to us.

You can also use Popmoney to direct your donation to our email address: info@ginlc.org for no cost to us. Check your financial institution for fees that might apply.

GINLC's influence stretches far

BY BERT URBANI

Our tiny island conservancy has an influence that stretches far and wide. In the school year of 1963-64, Marianne Stieger-Girsberger was a foreign exchange student at Grosse Ile High School, with the AFS exchange program. Marianne is Swiss, which makes her a born conservationist. The Swiss have always practiced living sustainably. It is second nature to them.

On a visit to Grosse Ile in 1996, she attended the Annual Membership Meeting of the GINLC at the Grosse Ile Golf and Country Club. Her American sister, Mandy Phillips was a founding member and the Stewardship chair at the time. She was impressed that her American family was a part of this new movement on Grosse Ile. She had always hoped that her beautiful American home would be protected and would remain as it was when she lived on West River Road. She became a GINLC member that day and has kept up through the newsletter ever since.

She has learned more about the wildlife of the area through the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy, having had a life-long passion for wildlife and particularly birds. She lives in Baden, Switzerland and has remained in touch with the Conservancy since joining in 1996. A recent letter brought a generous donation and this note, "Hello from this side of the Atlantic. Thanks for sending me the 'Voyageur.' Any news about birds? Our kite population has increased. I see one cruising above our house almost every day. Do you have kites or Black Kites at all?"

For an answer we turned to Julie Craves of the Rouge River Bird Observatory at the University of Michigan - Dearborn's

Environmental Interpretive Center. I sent her an email with Marianne's question and she replied, "We have no 'kites' in Michigan, although there are several kites in North America."

She provided the following websites:

Swallow-tailed Kite

www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/swallow-tailed_kite/id

Mississippi Kite

www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Mississippi_Kite/id

White-tailed Kite

www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/White-tailed_Kite/id

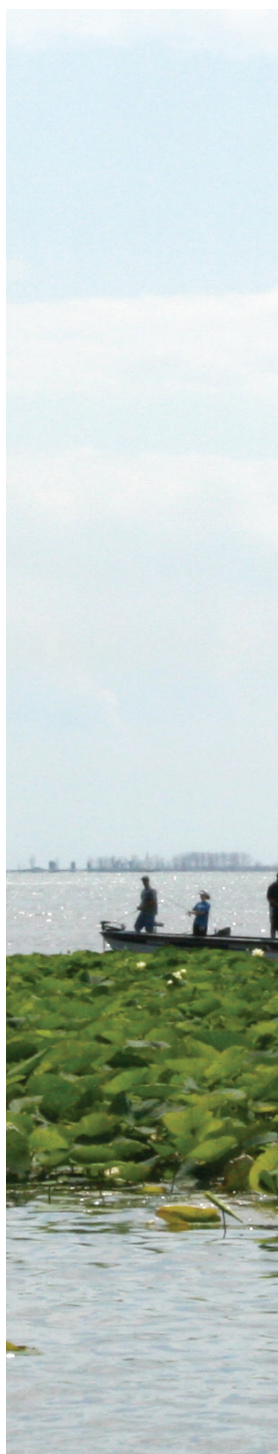
Snail Kite

www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Snail_Kite/id

Julie said, "The first two have had a few vagrant records in Michigan. None are in the same genus as the Black Kite. Old World raptors are well beyond my usual scope of knowledge!"

In truth, not much is beyond Julie's scope of knowledge. Check out the RRBO's website for information about the latest sightings in Dearborn, and compare with what we see here on Grosse Ile, where we see Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and Bald Eagles on an almost daily basis in addition to Cardinals, Blue Jays, Red-winged Blackbirds, Baltimore Orioles and many others. www.rrbo.org/in-the-field/latest-sightings

Many thanks to Marianne for her donation and continued connection with GINLC, which confirms the truth of our opening quote from Shakespeare, "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."



**SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 2
10 a.m.- 12 noon
Centennial Farm**

**PRESENTATION
by Tammy
Travis-Taylor
President, Grosse
Ile Historical
Society**

GINLC Annual Meeting November 2nd

The Grosse Ile Nature & Land conservancy will be holding their annual meeting on Saturday, November 2nd from 10 – 12 noon at the Centennial Farm Community Building. Conservancy members will be reviewing progress on a wide variety of projects that were undertaken during the year and their plans for next year. Tammy Travis-Taylor, President of the Grosse Historical Society will be the

guest speaker. The title of her talk will be *"From the Nike Site to Hennepin Point: the History of Protected Lands on Grosse Ile."* All residents of Grosse Ile are cordially invited. A complimentary continental breakfast will be available. This is your chance to learn about the various projects and activities that the "Conservancy" is working on to improve the quality of life on Grosse Ile.

TO RECEIVE EVENT NOTICES & NEWSLETTERS BY EMAIL, CONTACT US AT INFO@GINLC.ORG



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