



the VOYAGEUR

the newsletter of the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 5 & 6

ISLAND FEST
GINLC BOOTH

WISH LIST

2 DIP NETS (\$33)

10 SMALL ANIMAL
TRAPS (\$19)

AQUATIC LIGHT
TRAP (\$55)

BLACKLIGHT TRAP
(\$180)

CANOE—METAL OR
FIBERGLASS

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT

A Lower River Renaissance

Don't Rebuild—Re-Imagine

by Dr. Bruce Jones

•Renaissance•—a rebirth, renewal, a revival of learning.

Most people are not aware that our Conservancy's mission statement places equal emphasis on education and natural resource protection FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT. As a result, our Conservancy has been an important force in two quiet but major initiatives for our lower Detroit River region.

The first is the vision of the renaissance of our lower river and the communities along it. This vision has been professionally developed by the Detroit planning firm of Hamilton Anderson and was released to the public in early April. Our first involvement with this vision came in 1995 with our proposal to return our river's shoreline to people by creating a mainland riverfront park in Wyandotte and connecting with our bike path on Grosse Ile. It has since evolved into a greenway with a series of people-oriented destinations along the route.

Recently, we have been an active part of a larger group of citizens, all concerned about and planning for the future health of the lower river and the communities along it.

The vision is based on the fact that a viable community is dependent upon a sustainable economy which, in turn, is dependent upon a sustainable environment that provides a high quality of life for its residents. It is based on the success stories of other cities that have protected their river shorelines and then provided access to them for people. Denver, Colorado; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Portland, Oregon are just three examples. Closer examples are the downtown area of Windsor, Ontario and the proposed river front greenway from the Renaissance Center to the Belle Isle Bridge in Detroit.

The focal point for the vision and the primary destination is the Humbug complex (now protected) with its environmental education center, a museum for local maritime history and local Native American history and the International Wildlife Refuge headquarters—all located on the old Chrysler Paint Plant site in Trenton. Other destinations include natural areas, parks and recreation areas, fishing piers, paddle boat launch areas and other people oriented sites, all connected by a non-motorized trail running through a river front greenway.

The group is a loose affiliation of several community organizations such as the Friends of the Detroit River, Ducks Unlimited and the Grosse Ile nature and Land Conservancy. It has followed the idea of David Burnham, a noted Chicago architect of the early 1900s, who said, "Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood, and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble,

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ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP IN BLOOM AT FERMI 2

by: Marie Wilger

The Fermi 2 power plant in Newport, Michigan has long been recognized for its large "smokestacks," which are visible from I-75. Although these so-called smokestacks (which are, in all reality, environmentally friendly cooling towers) can be misleading, Fermi is actually a great contributor to wildlife. "Fermi's Wildlife Habitat Program" was originally certified in 2000 by Maryland's "Wildlife Habitat Council," re-certified in 2002, and in 2004 is still showing no signs of wilting.

In Fall 2003, Fermi became part of the Detroit River Wildlife Refuge after it signed an agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Fermi has also teamed up with the National Audubon Society for annual Christmas bird counts on the power plant site for many years. However, "Fermi's Wildlife Habitat Program" does not limit itself to large-scale projects with other major

organizations. Fermi employees know that even small efforts add up to great accomplishments.

Fermi team members have constructed an educational vivarium, built nesting structures for birds, and their wildlife plantings have kept them up to their elbows in dirt. This environmental leadership has even taken root in the surrounding communities! In the past, Fermi members have enlisted the help of boy scouts, and their love for nature keeps spreading like ivy because of their visits to local schools.

Fermi 2 is taking flight as a strong force behind the conservation and restoration of nature in Southeast Michigan. Spreading awareness about the environment has become increasingly important, and Fermi is a forerunner in making this awareness happen. Recruiting reputable organizations and coming up with inventive, new ideas every day, "Fermi's Wildlife Habitat Program" seems to have a long (dirt) road ahead of it. ★

Marie Wilger is a 19-year-old Trenton resident who is an Elementary Education major at Wayne State University. She lives at home with her parents, two brothers, a dog, and 14 turtles.

GINLC PARTICIPATES IN ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION

"The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, the second best time is now." African Proverb

Grosse Ile is a nature lover's paradise, especially in the fall, when our trees show their true beauty in glorious colors. We observe and enjoy nature's wonder, taking in the last days of summer.

When spring finally arrives, we look for the first green leaves to pop up, and notice that not much

color outlines our roadsides. GINLC believes we should change that by participating in the Arbor Day celebration each April. Our goal for the next few years is to plant a Redbud tree close to our permanent sign to feature the properties that are owned and stewarded by the Conservancy.

We chose Redbud *Cercis Canadensis*, because the flowers are welcome harbingers of spring. These tiny beautiful flowers are pink, sometimes with a purplish tinge, about 1/2" long on a 1/2" pedicel. They appear on twigs before the leaves and grow in bushes of 4-8, sometimes also on large branches or the trunk. Redbuds are common in the woodlands of the eastern U.S. and add a graceful touch of spring. They are appreciated by early nectar-seeking insects, including several species of butterflies. A variety of birds enjoy the seeds during winter.

We have already been in touch with our local nursery, Westcroft Gardens, and as usual, they will help and guide us in this endeavor.

Members and friends are invited to join us to meet this goal. Happy spring planting!

At left are GINLC board member Liz Hugel, husband Manfred Egerer, and daughters Martina and Monika. The family donated and planted a Redbud at the Nature Area entrance on Arbor Day, 2004, in honor of Liz's parents' 50th wedding anniversary, celebrated on May 2, 2004.



IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

How Volunteering Can Help

by Dr. James Conley

Just by itself, public approval of the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy isn't what makes it a success. It's success comes from participation—a lot of people volunteering to do what they can to keep a good thing going.

Volunteering can mean a lot of things. There's volunteering for work days, when you bring your rakes and shovels, and pruning shears and weed whips. Those times provide good fellowship, promote learning, and give participants a feeling of accomplishment.

There's also volunteering to serve on the board or committees to help. The tasks range from licking stamps to accounting. Grant writers, advertising and public relations people, and those who know about the ins and outs of land acquisition are needed. Educators are wanted to teach children and adults more about the flora and fauna at the Nature Center.

We need volunteers at the Nature Center to pass out literature and show visitors the trails. Birders are needed to count the many species that make the Nature Center home and to keep up with their nesting activity and migratory habits.

Another planned project that will require both person power and funding is the beautification of the Nature Center entry way.

Contributions for on-going and permanent expenses are also important. Right now, a storage shed for tools and equipment is needed to keep the Nature Center looking its best. It would be great, even, if someone would step forward to fund porta-potties for the season. (You can spend a lot of time at the Nature Center.) We could also use several benches for the Nature Center. When one is viewing a busy osprey nest, it would be a place to rest and relax.

Your financial support is also needed. When you are approached for membership dues, a few dollars more can make a big difference. Mowing, phone calls, travel, maps, brochures, and displays all require funding. The acquisition of land, even that contributed, requires a survey and identification signage. As you make out your asset allocation, either for present or ultimate distribution, please consider land disposition to GINLC.

This is a local effort to preserve, protect, defend and enhance our precious natural ambiance. There is no end to where your talents and energy can be put to use in an endeavor that serves the community and could give you some deep satisfaction for having made it possible. ★

Extended Hours Planned at Nature Center

The nature Area Committee is made of 5 members: Fred Pepper, Margarete Hasseroth, Michelle Griesmer, Barbara Leeper and Armando Sardanopoli. This committee is again planning activities with extended hours.

Now the Nature Area is open Thursday evening from 6-8PM, Saturdays from 10AM to 2PM and the third Sunday of each month from 1PM to 4PM. These new hours make it easier for visitors to enjoy the new improvements.

For first time visitors, the Nature Area is located on East River Road, south of Groh, just North of the Elbamar Boat Club. There are some scenic views overlooking Gibraltar Bay and the Marsh and Quarry Pond that make you feel like you are in some quiet, secluded area of Northern Michigan.

Cleared paths bring you right to the shore line at several points on the bay and a recently installed observation deck overlooks the marsh.

The deck, built as a Eagle Scout project, is a great place to see eagles, wrens, orioles and nesting osprey. Deer, rabbits, coyote and squirrels have also been sighted. In addition, it offers glimpses of anemone, jack in the pulpit and mayapple.

Another addition this year is the newly landscaped entrance into the Nature Area. Work had already begun last year to clear the entrance and you will see large glacial errata (rocks) set in place. During the spring months, there will be a planting of native flowers and bushes to give the entrance a pretty, colorful and natural Michigan look. ★

In Memory

We are saddened by the death of Cherry Perkins Ryder

Mrs. Ryder had been a generous and longtime supporter of the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy. In 1996 she donated part of her property, a beautiful addition to the conservancy inventory.

President's Message, continued from page 1

logical diagram, once recorded, will never die."

Our Conservancy has also been the inspirational force in the development of another innovative vision—this one with our school system. The "Landscape for Learning" integrates the marvelous biological diversity and open spaces found in and around our community into the school curriculum. We are deeply indebted to a very cooperative school administration for this effort—one that has already achieved wide notoriety even though it still is in the conceptual stages.

On a more down to earth level, we have no base line information on the aquatic insects, reptiles and amphibians, small animals and nesting birds in Gibraltar Bay and other areas around the Island. This information is vital to determine the health of our resources, especially wetlands, and can tell us what more, if anything, is needed to create a vital and sustainable habitat. At our instigation, Michigan State University, the Great Lakes Science Center and Detroit Audubon are planning a series of studies in our area this year to correct this deficit.

An exciting sign-off from this initiative is creating an opportunity for our students to participate in advanced placement and independent study in the sciences.

And, we can't forget the little ones. This summer, we will again be part of an expanded summer camp operated by our Recreation Department and the Downriver YWCA.

One last item. With a tremendous amount of cooperation from John Hartig, Navigator for the Greater Detroit American Heritage River Initiative, the conservancy has submitted grants totaling \$70,000 for completion of the Nature Area shoreline reconstruction begun last spring. We expect to hear about the grants in May or June.

Busy! You bet your boots. And everything is based on a healthy, sustainable, natural heritage for us today and for those who follow and for the creation of a high quality of life for our community. As you might guess, all these initiatives put a strain on our manpower and on our financial resources. We welcome any and all volunteers and additional donations.

I close with one of my favorite quotes from Margaret Mead, the late, renown anthropologist.


"Never doubt that the work of a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can cnages the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that every has."

—Dorothy Corkille Briggs

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

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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WWW.GINLNC.ORG

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