



the VOYAGEUR

SUMMER 2015

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GROSSE ILE NATURE & LAND CONSERVANCY

VOLUME 23 ■ NUMBER 2

"The earth laughs in flowers." — Ralph Waldo Emerson

UPCOMING EVENTS

GINLC programs at the
Gibraltar Bay Unit (GBU)
28820 East River Rd,
Grosse Ile

THE MOSQUITO HAWK

Saturday, Aug 1 @ 10am
Learn why dragonflies are
nick-named "mosquito
hawks" and more about
these fascinating insect!

WALK TO THE LOVELY LOTUS

Sunday, Aug 16 @ 1pm
Hike to the Lotus bed and
see and learn about this
beautiful flower

INCREDIBLE INSECTS

Saturday, Sept 12 @ 10am
An up-close exploration
including a catch-and-
release activity!

BIRDS OF THE BAY

Saturday, Sept 19 @ 8am
See the migrant birds
beginning their journey
to their winter homes

REGISTRATION:

Natalie Cypher
734-624-7993 or
natalieray27@gmail.com



Native Species of Grosse Ile American Lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*)

BY BERT URBANI

CHARACTERISTICS: The American Lotus is an interesting plant. It is often confused with water lilies, but is easily distinguishable from them. The white or pale yellow American Lotus flower is the largest native flower in the United States, with blooms 10 inches across. The leaves are perfectly round, up to two feet in diameter.

RANGE: The American Lotus is native in the Eastern United States and in Canada, Central America and Columbia. It is also found in California.

HABITAT: American Lotus grow in shallow water, 1-4 feet deep, with a soil bottom that is sandy or mucky. They prefer full sun and slow-moving or still waters in ponds, marshes, and inland lakes.

WILDLIFE VALUE: As a Michigan native aquatic plant, the submerged portion of the American Lotus provides desirable habitat for many micro and macro invertebrates. These

in turn are food for fish, ducks, reptiles, amphibians and other wildlife species.

VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES: The plants bloom from late July – mid August and can be viewed on Grosse Ile at the Gibraltar Bay Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and the Grosse Ile Airport property.

Come to the next GINLC "Walk to the Lovely Lotus" event on August 16 at 1pm for answers to these questions:

- How can you tell the difference between American lotus and water lilies?
- How did they end up in California if they are native to the Eastern U.S.?
- How did Native Americans use the lotus?
- How long do the seeds remain viable?
- What is the conflicting status of American lotus in Michigan and other states?
- What is the cultural significance of lotus flowers around the world?
- What is the fascinating trait of American lotus leaves and what are scientists learning about them?

DONATIONS

In memory of

Howard and Ruth Harvey

*from Bill Heinrich, who notes
that Howard Harvey was
president of the Grosse Ile
Historical Society and started
the Heritage Tree program*

In memory of

Clifford and Ernestine Gronda

from Ralph and Angela Gronda

SavOn Drugs

Reflections From the President

BY LIZ HUGEL

This issue is jam-packed with information about the Conservancy's latest efforts to fulfill our mission *to promote for the public benefit the preservation, stewardship and understanding of the natural resources of Grosse Ile and surrounding areas*. GINLC volunteers provide hundreds of hours in stewardship activities that transform our island. We are committed to educating all generations of conservationists, from toddlers to high school graduates to elders. We put our money (YOUR MONEY!) where our mouth is. Thank you to our volunteers and donors for making our work possible!

Austin Ader Receives GINLC 2015 Scholarship

BY BERT URBANI & COURTNEY SOLENBERGER-MCNEILL

An annual scholarship was established in 2012 in honor of Dr. Bruce Jones, a founding member of the GINLC and first President. It recognizes Grosse Ile High School graduating students for their involvement in protecting and enhancing the natural environment. We are pleased to announce our 2015 winner – Austin Ader.

Austin's essay exemplifies the qualities the GINLC is looking for in awarding the scholarship:

"Living on Grosse Ile is a fantastic experience. Surrounded by water, incredible wildlife, and beautiful views are something I admire each day. Every morning and afternoon as I ride along East River I am amazed at the wildlife. I have seen thousands of ducks migrating and taking a break from their long flight, an eagle flying low, and so much more. I know I am very fortunate to live in such a diverse ecological environment.

"Even at an early age, I would help clean up our Island. I joined Builders Club in Middle School, 2011 and continued with community service projects into High School with the Key Club, I have participated in many of our Island cleanup events. Each time I see the lack of personal responsibility and disregard for keeping our island beautiful. From my freshman to senior year at the high school, I continued to get up early, put on my old clothes and meet my friends to help clean and pick-up trash left by others on our island.

"In all of the clean-up activities, I am amazed and disturbed to discover how much trash litters our Island. Litter continues to be a problem that I see effects our community, both globally and locally. We need to reduce the amount of paper and packaging we use. With my cumulative GPA at 3.7 and this semester my GPA is 4.0, I plan to attend Michigan State University in the fall. I want to major in Business, and part of the program is the science of packaging. Having an opportunity to work on and design better packaging concepts is an opportunity for me to learn more about all aspects of packaging. I hope to have an influence on how to reduce the adverse effects of packing traditional products as well as transporting products. I hope to have an impact to help reduce the amount of wasted natural resources as well as the impact on the amount of materials that is left behind as litter."

CONGRATULATIONS, AUSTIN! We look forward to your continued success and conservation efforts.





Signage Installed

BY PETER KANTZ & BERT URBANI

Members of the GINLC have been busy installing signs around town to inform the public about the natural treasures in our area. An illustrated sign depicting photos and information about the avian wildlife one might observe at the Waterfront Park was recently installed next to the spotting scope.

Three interpretive nature signs were installed at the Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve in May. The sign located at the east end of the boardwalk explains the importance of wetlands. The two signs mounted on the observation platform overlooking Hennepin Marsh contain pictures and information on the wildlife that make their home in and around the marsh.

The Waterfront Park is at the end of Grosse Ile Parkway on E. River Rd. The Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve is located on Meridian Road about a half mile north of Bridge Road. Both locations are open to the public from dawn to dusk (Hennepin Marsh Gateway is open year round while the Waterfront Park is closed during the winter). Both sites are excellent stopping off points while walking or biking in the area.



Stewardship News

BY PETER KANTZ & BERT URBANI

INTREPID POND CLEAN-UP – GINLC volunteers turned out in force to cut grass, pull weeds and remove dead bushes and trees at Intrepid Pond the weekend before Islandfest. Intrepid Pond is a gateway for both Grosse Ile Airport and Commerce Park as well as the GISA soccer fields. The GINLC Stewardship Event ensured that the area looked its best for Islandfest and the soccer tournament held the last weekend in May. GINLC has stewarded the area around the pond for the past eight years. Trees, bushes, wildflowers and grasses have been planted. An Eagle Scout, sponsored by GINLC, built a trail and installed signs around the pond last year. Further improvements to the area are in the planning stage



GINLC volunteers rest after lugging over a thousand pounds of boulders down to the Waterfront Park to protect the patio and bench from erosion. If you ever wondered how the Egyptian pyramids were built without modern machinery, these guys can give you a demonstration. *From l-r, seated, Keeton Ross, Phil Pellett, John Leon. Standing, Peter Kantz, Keith Fusinski, Jim Kenyon.*

WATERFRONT PARK – High water and heavy rain created erosion problems for the GINLC-installed brick patio at the shoreline park located at the eastern end of Grosse Ile Parkway. On Saturday June 6th a group of GINLC volunteers constructed a wall of boulders in front of the patio to protect the very popular patio and bench from damage due to high water levels in the Detroit River.

Birds of a Feather Flock to Nature Programs

BY NATALIE CYPHER,
Interpretive Naturalist



Yellow Warbler

This past May we held our annual “Birds of the Bay” program at the Gibraltar Bay Unit of the Detroit International Wildlife Refuge here on Grosse Ile. Although it was a rainy morning, we had several eager participants, and the birding was excellent. The program was held during the peak of spring migration here in southeast Michigan, and we identified 32 species of birds. Passing migrants included Canada Warbler and Blackpoll Warbler, and we had several nesting species such as Yellow Warbler, Eastern Kingbird, and Song Sparrow.

On June 13 we explored the “Nature of the Bay” just as the summer season began. We were lucky enough to observe a couple of active bird nests up close – including the Eastern Phoebe – a tail-bobbing Flycatcher who prefers to nest near water, and the familiar Tree Swallow, many of whom have taken residence in several of the bluebird boxes at the prairie. We also learned about the Red Wings of the bay, the intellect of the Blue Jay, and the reason why no feathers are actually blue. We will continue to explore Gibraltar Bay throughout the summer – join us for one, or all, of our programs! You never know what we might see.

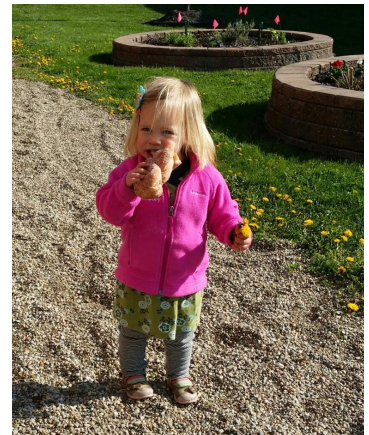
GEOFF CLARKE

Encouraging the Next Generation of Conservationists

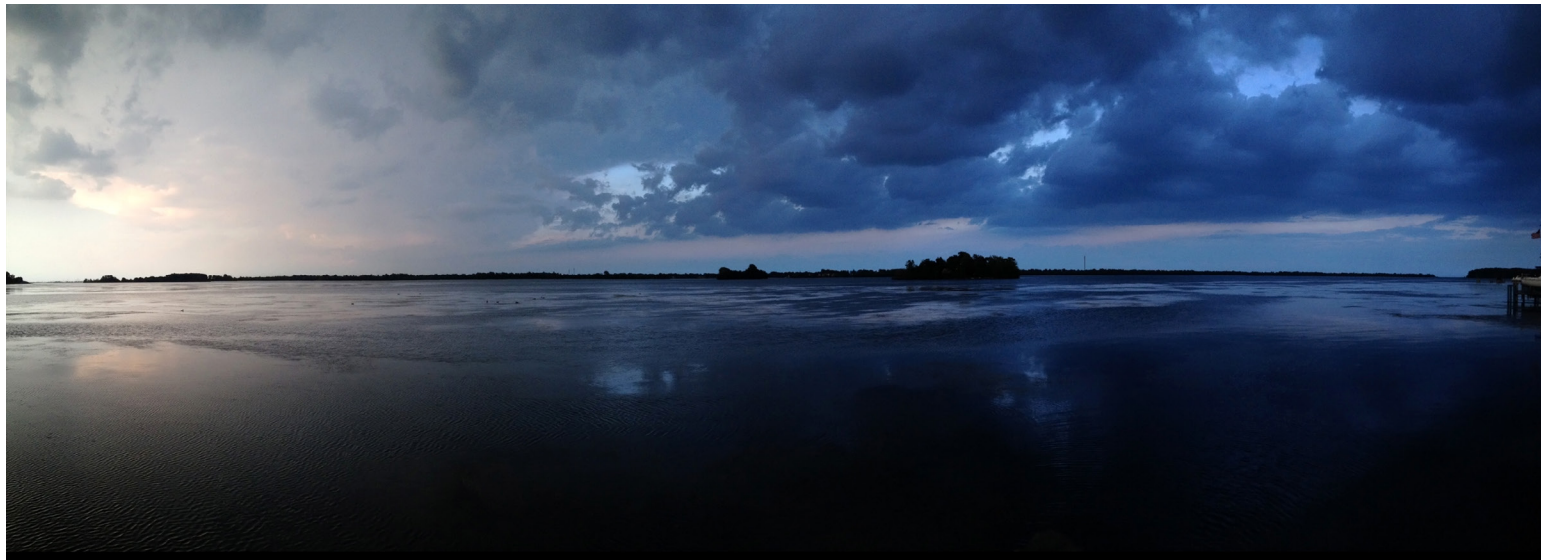
BY BERT URBANI

The GINLC is involved with local youth in many ways. Besides the Photo Contest (pages 5-7) and the GIHS Scholarship (page 2), Education Committee members organized a “Grosse Ile Birds” project for Girl Scout Daisies (Kindergarten) at Meridian Elementary School on March 19, a “GIT (Grosse Ile Township) School Garden Clean-Up Project” with Cub Scouts and Middle School Service Groups in April followed by a Middle School Concert in the garden in May, and an invasive species (garlic mustard) removal day with Cub Scouts on May 2. Many of the Gibraltar Bay Unit (GBU) programs are geared towards families and children, such as Natalie Cypher’s “Kids Discovery – Un-Natural Exploration” on June 10 and a June 26 “Parade of Pollinators” with US Fish & Wildlife Service Park Ranger Jennie Braatz.

Many GINLC members have fond memories of childhood experiences in nature and are happy to help create similar memories with youngsters today, people who will grow up appreciating nature and working to preserve it for generations to come. As GINLC co-founder Dr. Bruce Jones used to say, “Let’s get the kids outside!”



Top left: The Daisies on the Rock of Gibraltar [Bay Unit], *Top right:* Daisy Sis Cleaver has a donut in one hand and dandelions in the other at GIMS. *Bottom left:* Natalie and Cub Scouts bag garlic mustard. *Bottom right:* Cub Scouts and Middle School students pose proudly after they cleaned the garden beds.



GINLC *Take It Outside* Photo Contest Winners Selected

BY BARBARA THAYER

When you look through a camera lens something magical happens. You might get a macro view showing the delicate veins in a dragonfly's wings, veins you wouldn't have noticed without the lens. Or in a panoramic view the details are obscured but, instead, you get a wider, broader view, one that also gives you a different understanding.

The latter is exemplified in Michael Kalata's photograph, *Raging Storm*, the Grand Prize winner in Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy's photo contest, *Take It Outside*. The purpose of the contest is to encourage high school students to get outside and observe our environment. This year 73 high school students from nine high schools entered 100 photographs in our three categories: Waterways, Pollinators, and Wildlife. Cash prizes were awarded for the Grand Prize and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes in each category.

The two judges were Karen Skrocki and Michael Martin. Karen is a Grosse Ile resident who has had many of her photographs published. She loves to take pictures of wildlife. You might also know her from another of her many interests, music. Michael Martin has taken photographs for 50 years, has organized and judged photo contests, and has won many awards for his own photos. He is the Team Leader of the Separations and Ecology team at BASF.

The judges selected the Grand Prize winner, winners in each category, and 15 impressive Honorable Mention entries. All these photographs will be displayed at Trenton Veterans Memorial Library in August and at Bacon Memorial District Library in Wyandotte during September. Our local business, The Framery and Gallery, in Trenton helped GINLC with the mats for the photographs.

Grand Prize
Raging Storm
Michael Kalata,
Grosse Ile
High School



Chelsea Barron, of Riverview, shows her work at the Grosse Ile Islandfest exhibit.

The purpose of the contest is to encourage high school students to get outside and observe our environment.

TURN THE PAGE TO SEE THIS YEAR'S WINNING PHOTOS >>>

PHOTO CONTEST

Right: 3rd Place
Waterways
Shades of Dusk
Alyssa Farnham-
Jenkins, Trenton
High School

Center right:
3rd Place
Pollinators
***What 'chu
Looking At?***
Chelsea Barron,
Riverview
Community
High School

Bottom right:
3rd Place Wildlife
Eye the Beauty
Brielle Bashore,
Trenton
High School



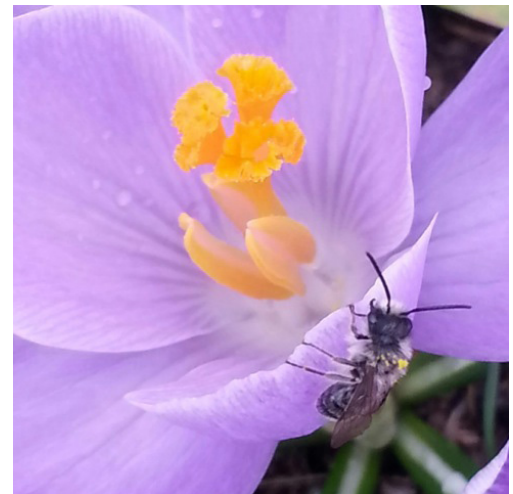
©Alyssa Farnham-Jenkins



2nd Place Waterways
Beacon
Susan Lowler,
Grosse Ile High School



2nd Place Wildlife
Leaves
Patricia Roderick,
Trenton High School





©Alyssa Farnham-Jenkins



Top left:
1st Place Pollinators
Beauty & the Bee
Alyssa Farnham-Jenkins, Trenton High School

Top right:
1st Place Waterways
Sun Bridge
Eric Krause, Flat Rock High School

Left: 2nd Place Pollinators
Natural Enemy
Emma Davis, Riverview Community High School



1st Place Waterways
Sunset Over Gibraltar Bay
Jake Dudash, Grosse Ile High School

Right: 1st Place Wildlife
Nature's Post
Chelsea Barron, Riverview Community High School



Hot Off The Press!

BY BERT URBANI

Have you seen the updated Open Space brochure? The Grosse Ile Open Space Committee and the GINLC recently collaborated to update and expand the brochure that was produced in 2012. The Grosse Ile Natural Areas brochure, hot off the press, now contains information about every natural area on Grosse Ile, from Open Space to GINLC land, to the federal Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR), to the state-owned islands.

A Guide to the Natural Areas of Grosse Ile

Prepared by the Grosse Ile Open Space Greenways Committee and
Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy
Updated May 2015



The brochure includes: a map of Grosse Ile which identifies all the natural areas, descriptions of each natural area, the rules governing access and use of the natural areas with contact information, and a list of the wildlife you may see in these areas and elsewhere on Grosse Ile. To save funds, only a limited number of copies were printed. They are available at various locations including the Township Office, the Grosse Ile U.S. Post Office, Kroger and GI Hardware. The brochure can also be accessed on-line on the Township and GINLC websites.

Heritage Tree Program Update

BY BERT URBANI



The Heritage Tree Program, conceived but dormant for 50 years, was resurrected on Earth Day as a partnership between the GINLC and the Grosse Ile Historical Society. The project is underway on Grosse Ile to identify and protect the island's significant trees – those that are historic, memorial, endangered, or vying for “champion” tree status in terms of size. An article by Pam Frucci in the (sad to say) LAST issue of the Ile Camera discussed the work underway and the criteria to identify heritage trees in greater detail. The team has developed a form for residents to use. Residents are urged to measure their trees and submit the info by October 1 to GINLC so that the data can be provided to the township for registration. Check your GITV listing for an upcoming short video about the program. Visit the GINLC website ginlc.org for more information and the form. If you need assistance in measuring your tree, please contact GINLC board member Eric Michael at 313-995-6580.



Here are some websites to help you identify your tree, and we can help as well!

<http://mff.dsisd.net/PDF/1-TreeBasics/2-TreeID.pdf>

www.oakgov.com/msu/Documents/publications/e2332_id_trees.pdf

<https://www.arboday.org/trees/whattree/whatTree.cfm?ItemID=E6A>

<http://www.outdoor-michigan.com/Trees.htm>

*The project is underway on Grosse Ile to
identify & protect the island's significant trees.*



Healthy Lawn Care — From the Expert

BY BERT URBANI

Grosse Ile residents and friends were treated to an entertaining and informative program about Healthy Lawns on Earth Day at St. James Episcopal Church. Gary Eichen, Plant Health Care/Bio-Turf Lawn Manager at Mike's Tree Surgeons in Troy, was the featured speaker. Gary began his talk with the reminder that we all live in a watershed and our actions affect the quality of water we all depend on. Grosse Ile is part of the Combined Downriver Watershed, and obviously all the water on the island drains into the Detroit River and then into Lake Erie. Last summer, people in the Monroe and Toledo areas could not drink Lake Erie water for several days because of toxic algae, largely caused by nutrients (fertilizer) drained into the lake.

He also brought to our attention the fact that it is illegal in Michigan to apply fertilizer less than 15 feet from any surface water, unless there is a continuous natural vegetative buffer at least 10 feet wide between the turf and the surface water, or, if a spreader guard, deflector shield or drop spreader is used and the fertilizer is not applied within 3 feet of the water. He noted that it makes good sense to plant a vegetative buffer.

Gary talked about the importance of understanding and maintaining healthy soil to have a healthy lawn. Soil is not just dirt; it is a living substance with millions of beneficial bacteria.

For the full presentation, visit ginlc.org/education.html. Gary's main points about how to have a healthy, green lawn that is also healthy for people and the environment are summarized on the next page.

If you are a do-it-yourselfer, you should adopt these healthy lawn care practices to ensure you have a healthy and safe lawn. Unfortunately, for those who hire lawn care services, there is a shortage of lawn care companies in the Downriver area that are certified in the Healthy Lawn Care Program for Watershed Protection. Urge your lawn care company to get trained and endorsed through the Michigan Green Industry Association. If customers demand proper lawn care, the companies will decide it is worthwhile to change!

If customers demand proper lawn care, the companies will decide it is worthwhile to change!

Simple, Painless Fundraising!



KROGER CARDS

Don't forget to reenroll your Kroger Plus card to benefit the Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy! Go to www.kroger.com/communityrewards to enroll or re-enroll (you have to renew every year). Thanks!



AMAZON SMILE

Don't forget to smile! Sign up for Amazon Smile, select Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy as your charitable organization, and then 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products will be donated to GINLC.

Lasting Support

Have you ever thought about a lasting way to make a difference? By including GINLC in your will or estate planning, your love of Grosse Ile's natural beauty will remain as a lasting bequest for generations to come. For more information on making a bequest, please contact your attorney to include GINLC in your will or trust. Let us know of your intentions to include the Conservancy in your estate plan by calling the treasurer at 734-761-0125 or email donate@ginlc.org.



Clip & Save GARY EICHEN'S GUIDE TO A HEALTHY LAWN

1. Proper Mowing:

- a. Grass blade length should be 2.5 to 3.5" in summer stress periods, 2.0 to 2.5" in spring and fall.
- b. Never remove more than 1/3 of the blade during a single cut.
- c. Never mow when the grass is wet.
- d. Let the clippings fall.

2. Proper Watering:

- a. Determine the amount of water your lawn may need on a weekly basis, 1/2 to 1-1/2 inches per week (Gary waters 1 inch per week during dry weather).
- b. Measure the amount of water applied by placing an open, straight sided container on the lawn. Mark the container with the desired amount (0.5, 1.0, 1.5 inches). Keep track of the time during the test so you can water for the same amount of time in the future to get your desired amount of water on the lawn.
- c. Water between 10 am and 2 pm. That way any excess water will evaporate and avoids ponding. Watering will cool the grass on hot days. Overly wet grass can develop mold and mildew.

3. Fertilizer:

- a. Have your soil tested to determine if you need any fertilizer.
- b. Do not fertilize (or allow your lawn care company to do so) when the ground is frozen. It is illegal and stupid. Fire your lawn care company if they come out when the ground is still frozen. The ground temperature should be 60°F.
- c. Fertilizer is labeled with 3 numbers, representing N-P-K (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium). The second number (P) should be 0 or very low, with a label of SRN (Slow Release Nitrogen) or WIN (Water Insoluble Nitrogen).
- d. Fertilizer should be free of pesticides. Never use Weed and Feed.
- e. A list of Earth Friendly Fertilizers can be obtained at the websites of GINLC, ginlc.org, the Michigan Green Industry Association, and the Wayne County Dept of Environment.
- f. Apply fertilizer (if needed) when the grass plant is growing, spring and fall.
- g. Remove all fertilizer from paved surfaces.
- h. Create a 15 ft. to 25 ft. buffer zone from lakes and rivers. (State law minimum.)
- i. Water after the application for best results.
- j. Use a broadcast spreader, not a drop spreader (except 3 feet from surface water).

4. Core Aeration is one of the best things you can do to help your lawn:

- a. Increases oxygen levels in the soil (soil microbes need oxygen to live and work).
- b. Reduces soil compaction.
- c. Reduces thatch.
 - (1) Thatch is normal. Up to one inch is beneficial; it prevents weed seeds from reaching the ground and sprouting, and cushions the grass from heavy traffic.
 - (2) Do not use dethatching devices – they cut through the connectors (rhizomes and stolons) to new grass plants, and will thin-out your lawn.

5. Controlling Weeds:

- a. Hand-dig where possible.
- b. Spot treat with the correct herbicide, and follow directions exactly.

Why do animals cross the road? To get to the other side!

BY BERT URBANI

You may have seen the wild turkey hen that spent a lot of time misdirecting traffic on E. River Road in early-mid June. Her continued presence caused GINLC volunteers to create and install a couple “Caution – Wild Turkey Crossing (or Resting In Road)” signs to alert drivers to the potential hazard to themselves and the turkey.



GI Animal Control Officer Julie Cortis gave us the scoop. Wild turkeys usually hang out in a flock, but during nesting season the females go their separate ways to mate and nest. Unfortunately, our flock is lacking a Tom Turkey (male) and the females are a bit disconcerted. This particular female took a liking to the warmth of the asphalt road and hunkered down on or near the road for several days.

She has not been seen for a while, and we hope she and her sister hens are safe in the natural areas of Grosse Ile.

In addition to the wild turkey, many other species of wildlife share our roads. While the correct mantra on the highway is “Don’t veer for deer,” on Grosse Ile our speeds should be slow enough to allow us to stop and help our fellow creatures get to safety. Drivers need to be patient to allow the safe escort.



A Snapping Turtle seen in the Gibraltar Bay Unit near the Quarry Pond on June 13. Snapping Turtles rarely leave the water; however during the month of June female Snapping Turtles venture onto land so that they can lay their eggs. If you encounter one please respect them and give them space - they feel especially vulnerable and threatened on land, because they cannot swim and hide like they would in their usual habitat - the water.

Photo and caption by Natalie Cypher

SAD NEWS: As we go to press, we’ve heard from Julie Cortis, Grosse Ile Animal Control, that recently two fawns and a wild turkey were hit and killed by cars on Grosse Ile roads. This is a grim reminder that we all need to obey the speed limits and be alert while driving.

A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

It is OK to help an animal cross the road if you can do so safely. Send it in the direction it is headed, or else it will turn around and go back across the road. Barbara bare-handed the map turtle, but you would need leather gloves and a box to assist a snapping turtle. Carry those supplies and a towel in your car, along with the phone number of GI Animal Control 734-469-7145 and the link to MDNR-licensed wildlife rehabilitators if the animal is injured, <http://www.michigandnr.com/dlr/>

GINLC board member Barbara Thayer carefully assists a Common Map Turtle to cross E. River Rd, near Elba-Mar Boat Club.



GINLC events at the GBU:

» THE MOSQUITO HAWK

Saturday, Aug 1 @ 10am

» WALK TO THE LOVELY LOTUS

Sunday, Aug 16 @ 1pm

» INCREDIBLE INSECTS

Saturday, Sept 12 @ 10am

» BIRDS OF THE BAY

Saturday, Sept 19 @ 8am

Registration: Natalie Cypher –
734-624-7993 or
natalieray27@gmail.com

USFWS Refuge Events:

» SUNDAES ON A SUNDAY

Open House at the
Brancheau Unit
Sunday, July 19, 1-4pm

» OPEN HOUSE AT HUMBUG MARSH

Sunday, Aug 1, 1-4pm

» WILDLIFE MATCHING GAMES

Sunday, Aug 23, 1-2 pm

» A TASTE OF STEWARDSHIP WORKDAY FUN age 10 & up

Sunday, Sept 25, 9am-12pm

» OPEN HOUSE AT HUMBUG MARSH

Sunday, Sept 25, 1-4pm

*Come visit me
at the GBU!*



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



To sign up for a
work party call,
PETER KANTZ
734-558-2149

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