

the VOYAGEUR

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GROSSE ILE NATURE & LAND CONSERVANCY

VOLUME 26 • NUMBER 3

"Anyone who has ever stopped to watch a hawk in flight will know that this is one of the natural world's most elegant phenomena." — John Burnside

CALENDAR

GIBRALTAR BAY UNIT (GBU) DETROIT RIVER INT'L WILDLIFE REFUGE

28820 E. River Rd.
Remains open Dawn to
Dusk year round

GINLC EVENTS

OWL PROWL

Fri, Nov 9 @ 7 pm
Centennial Farm
Register: GINLC.education@
gmail.com

GINLC ANNUAL MEETING

Sat, Nov 10 @ 10 am
GI Country Club

REFUGE EVENTS

HAWK WATCH

Through Nov 30
Lake Erie Metropark
boat launch

USFWS FREE MOVIE

"Clear Water:
Detroit's River Revival"
Tues, Oct 16 @ 7 pm
Trenton Village Theatre

Events cont'd on page 2

LEFT: GREG HUMME / CC BY-SA 3.0, RIGHT: JON NELSON / CC BY 2.0



NATIVE SPECIES OF GROSSE ILE Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

BY BERT URBANI

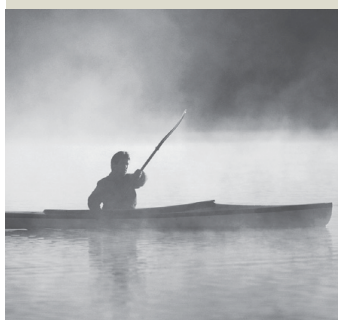
Look up in the sky. It's a bird...it's a plane...it's Super—nope, it's a bird. In fact, it's thousands of birds! It's Fall Migration time! While songbirds migrate at night, raptors (and Monarch butterflies) migrate during the day, taking advantage of warm air updrafts (thermals) to gain height. They soar on the thermals and save energy by not having to constantly flap their wings. Red-tailed Hawks are among the most numerous raptors observed on Grosse Ile and their peak migration period is usually around Halloween.

CHARACTERISTICS: Red-tailed Hawks, or Red-tails as they are commonly called, are members of the Buteo group of raptors, which are noted for robust bodies, broad, rounded wings and short, broad tails. Females are slightly larger

than males in length and weight (18 - 26 in and 32 - 52 oz vs 18 - 22 in and 24 - 46 oz), but with similar wingspans of 45 - 52 inches. There are 14 subspecies that vary mostly in color. Most adults are brown when viewed from above, except for the pronounced reddish orange color of the tail. From below, the underbelly is pale, with dark edges on the wings and across the belly. Red-tails have the short, hooked beak of all raptors, but their beaks, legs and feet are yellow. Juveniles have yellowish irises which darken to reddish-brown by age 3-4 years.

RANGE, HABITAT & DIET: Red-tailed Hawks are found throughout the Western Hemisphere. They occupy a variety of habitats, including urban and agricultural areas, forests, deserts and grasslands. They seem to prefer open country, and are often observed on lone trees and even utility poles and fenceposts. In our area, their diet consists mostly of small diurnal mammals such as squirrels, but they readily eat whatever their locale offers, including birds and reptiles.

— Continued on Page 6



SPECIAL DONORS

IN MEMORY OF MARGARETE HASSERODT

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John Leon and Bert Urbani
Jerome Steele
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Dean & Helga Thelen
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*for his donation for the
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DAVID & CAROLE POLESKI

*for their lifetime
membership donation*

**THANK YOU TO OUR
GENEROUS
IN-KIND DONOR:
GROSSE ILE GOLF &
COUNTRY CLUB (ANNUAL
MEETING LOCATION)**

Thank You

Reflections From the President

BY PETER KANTZ

If summer is too hot and winter is too cold, then Fall is the perfect time of year for you. Enjoy it. It's only here for a few short months. Nature puts on a great show as it prepares for winter. Trees erupt in a blaze of color as they slowly shed their leaves. Animals scurry around looking for food to store away for winter.

Grosse Ile is surrounded by nature's autumnal show. Go out and enjoy it. Hike the trails. Ride the bike paths. Visit the wildlife refuge at Gibraltar Bay or Sunrise Park at the east end of Grosse Ile Parkway. This is one show you can see for free and you don't need to leave the island.

An important part of GINLC's mission is to steward and protect our natural resources so future generations can enjoy the show nature puts on in the Fall. Many of our members take an active role in fulfilling our mission. Protecting the environment takes on many forms, from working at our properties and the properties that we steward for other agencies, to being a vocal advocate for the environment. Our Annual Membership Meeting on November 10th is an excellent opportunity to learn more about the Conservancy and how you can become actively involved. Hope to see you there.



Barbara Leeper / 1931 – 2018

With sadness we note the passing of Barbara Leeper, former GINLC board member and ardent conservationist. Barbara served as a board member for many years starting in 1997. She remained active in the Nature Area (now the Gibraltar Bay Unit) with her late husband, Frank LeFeuvre. Barbara retired after 40 years as a teacher in Southgate Public Schools.

REFUGE EVENTS *Continued*

REFUGE NATURE STORE HOLIDAY SHOP

Thurs, Nov 15
from 4 – 8 pm
TV's Grand Event, Trenton

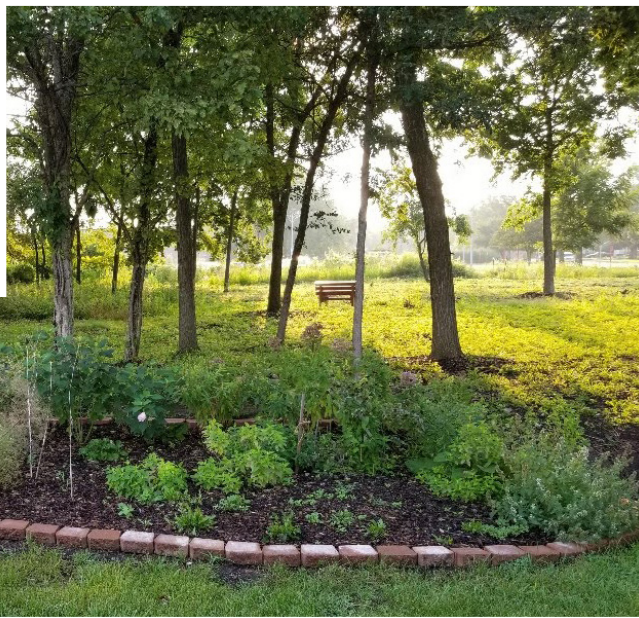
USFWS OWL PROWL

Fri, Nov 16
from 7 – 9 pm
at the GBU

EASY WAY TO GIVE



KROGER CARD Enroll your Kroger Plus card to benefit the Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy! Enroll or re-enroll at www.kroger.com/communityrewards (you have to renew every year). Thanks!



Fall 2018 Stewardsip

BY PETER KANTZ

Most of our organized stewardship events take place March through October on Saturday mornings. We held several very successful stewardship events this year. We are however actively involved in stewardship throughout the year. We steward the Gibraltar Bay Unit of the DRIWR located at 28820 East River, Grosse Ile, every Monday morning from 9:00 am to noon, year-round, weather permitting. The work involved at the wildlife refuge varies by the season. In the warm months we cut the grass, maintain the trails and rock gardens, remove invasive plants, etc. In the cooler months we remove old

“Everyone can help steward the Conservancy’s properties and the properties we steward for the Township and the USFWS.”

fences, install new fences, install signs and bird houses and address any maintenance issues at the facility. If you would like to be involved in stewardship at GBU, let me know by email at info@ginlc.org or stop by the refuge some Monday morning.

Stewardship takes on many forms, most involve physical labor. Everyone however can help steward the Conservancy’s properties and the

properties we steward for the Township and the USFWS. If you see someone dumping yard waste or trash on Conservancy property let us know. If you see someone storing cars, boats, etc. on the property let us know. If you see someone building unauthorized structures, cutting down trees or hunting and trapping on the property let us know. Our properties are there for everyone to enjoy. Misuse of the property by a small minority prevents others from enjoying it, harms the environment and costs the Conservancy time and money to correct the issue. Be the eyes and ears of the Conservancy, document the misuse and contact us. To report misuse, email us at info@ginlc.org.

Stewardship is expensive, equipment wears out and needs to be replaced. If you have yard or garden maintenance equipment in good shape that you would like to donate to the Conservancy, email me at info@ginlc.org.

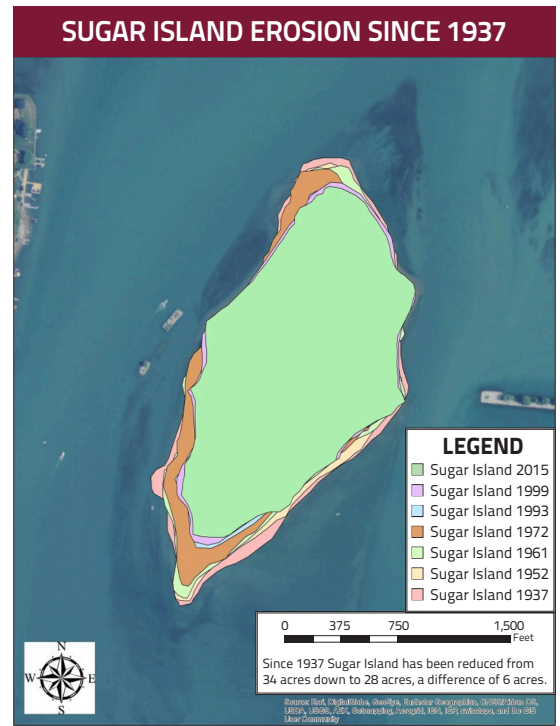
Left: With sweat, but, fortunately no blood or tears, the GIHS School Nature Study Area near the football field is shaping up nicely. Right: Lois Zook joined a group of GINLC volunteers at a cleanup of the Hennepin Gateway Preserve on Sept 22.

HAWK WATCH

The 36th annual Detroit River Hawk Watch is underway at Lake Erie Metropark’s boat launch, where official Hawk Counter Kevin Georg and his band of volunteer counters assemble every day to gaze into the sky and identify and quantify the diverse travelers. Their daily totals are reported to the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) which maintains a data base of raptor populations to gauge species health and trends. Hawk Watch runs from Sept 1 to Nov 30 and counts the following raptors (in order of earliest to latest migrants): Osprey, Bald Eagle, Merlin, Northern Harrier, Swainson’s Hawk, American Kestrel, Broad-winged Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Turkey Vulture, Cooper’s Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, and Red-tailed Hawk. Check out the Detroit River Hawk Watch public Facebook page or go see them at Lake Erie Metropark. You can become a volunteer hawk counter too!



Aerial view of GI contractor E. F. Korneffel creating habitat shoals near Stony Island.



Island Renovation

BY BERT URBANI

If you're not doing a major renovation of your home, it's guaranteed that your neighbor is. The sounds and sights of construction and contractors (and brave do-it-yourselfers) are ever-present on our island. But renovation projects are not limited to homo sapiens' habitat.

For the past several years we have observed (and perhaps wondered about) what was going on at Stony and Celeron Islands. Major wildlife habitat restoration projects are in process at Stony and Celeron funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and coordinated by the Friends of the Detroit River (FDR). And (hallelujah!) a GLRI feasibility study is underway at Sugar Island to address the erosion problem before the island dissolves away before our very eyes.

STONY & CELERON ISLANDS: Stony (100 acres) and Celeron (81 acres) are part of Grosse Ile Township but owned by the State of Michigan and managed by the MI Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The projects we have been observing are designed to restore many of the natural features (aka Beneficial Uses) that have been lost (Impaired) over time. In its public education piece about the projects, FDR notes that “[i]n 1815, the Detroit River shoreline consisted of coastal wetlands up to a mile wide. Since then, there have been dramatic changes due to

channel modification, encroachment of the river, hardening of the shoreline, development, and contamination.” The Detroit River was declared an Area of Concern (AOC) because of the many Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs), particularly “loss of fish and wildlife habitat, degradation of fish and wildlife populations and degradation of benthos.”

“The projects create 7,900 linear feet of habitat shoals that are structurally sound yet incorporate vegetation and shoreline and aquatic habitat, while protecting and promoting development of over 100 acres of backwater habitat. In addition, more than 100 habitat structures will

be constructed for fish, turtles, snakes, amphibians and other herpetofauna. Finally, access to the restoration sites greatly benefits birders, fishermen and hunters who use the islands and surrounding waters for recreation.”

SUGAR ISLAND: Most Grosse Ile residents know that in the early 1900s, Sugar Island was an amusement park and dance hall that attracted thousands of Detroiters on the Tashmoo steamer.

On June 18, 1936, the steamer struck a rock, took on water and sunk, after safely depositing some 1,400 passengers at a dock in Amherstburg, Ontario. This event and other factors, including competition from Boblo Amusement Park, doomed the Sugar Island park. Later efforts to commercialize Sugar Island were prohibited, first as an amusement park for African Americans (both Sugar Island and Boblo restricted access) and then, by building homes on the privately-owned island. It then became known for its wildlife, both fur/fin/feathered and local partying boaters. In 2012 Sugar Island

“The Detroit River was declared an Area of Concern (AOC) because of the many Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs), particularly “loss of fish and wildlife habitat, degradation of fish and wildlife populations and degradation of benthos.”

was purchased by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and became a unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. After a lengthy wait for a visitor services plan, the island was opened to hunters during hunting season and the western beach to boaters from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

FDR project manager Sam Lovell oversees the work performed by SmithGroup JJR and its subcontractors. He noted in the FDR Summer 2018 newsletter that Sugar Island has shrunk from 34 acres to 28 acres since 1937. "Because the southern end of Sugar island faces Western Lake Erie, it is exposed to high wind and wave action. As a result, approximately 10 percent of the island has been lost to erosion in recent decades." FDR and USFWS are partnering on research that began this spring to explore "the ecological value and feasibility of controlling shoreline erosion while enhancing fish and wildlife habitat." The article notes that "[c]onstruction of protective shoals around the island's south end is one idea to control shoreline erosion and protect the coastal wetland." That strategy needs to be verified because "it is critical to understand how the cross dike from the Livingstone Channel has influenced flow."

An interesting paragraph mentions two alternatives: "One hypothesis is that the island has eroded from accelerated flow wrapping around the isle's southern tip, now 120 years since the cross dike was constructed. Once a cliff-face forms, other erosive forces like precipitation, wind and tree-fall act on that face, and the river may be a secondary force causing the island's erosion. In this case, stabilization may require regrading to take away the cliff-face. Conversely, the face of this cliff may be excellent habitat for bank swallows and kingfishers, which would warrant stabilizing the cliff as it is, in some manner, without regrading."

Scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey, Michigan Office of the Great Lakes and the USFWS are involved in this study, collecting data on water levels, sustained wind speeds, height of wind-generated waves, and climate changes which will affect the island. Their research will also include methods to enhance the upland forest habitat which still contains invasive ornamental plants from the amusement park era. The studies are expected to be concluded in November 2018.

Many Grosse Ile residents share the sense of urgency expressed in an email by Dr. Brian Hartwell, "With the high water we are experiencing, the destruction will be severe, and to me already is worthy of being called a critical emergency." We are all anxiously awaiting the results of the study and the restoration work that will follow.

Nature Classes Coming

BY SABRINA MASTROIANNI

Over the summer, Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy and Lake Erie Metropark have been collaborating to start on-site nature-themed education programs for students at Grosse Ile schools. On behalf of the conservancy, Lake Erie



USFWS Park Ranger Jennie Braatz with GI Daisy Scouts

Metropark staff will be visiting schools from November through the end of March, for a total of six visits, each lasting an entire school day.

The topics will vary but include habitats, plants and wildlife, specifically focusing on our area. We are currently working with PAT members to schedule programs at

Parke Lane Elementary, and hope to present programs at other Grosse Ile schools in the future. By providing engaging and informative programs, we hope this collaboration helps students gain an appreciation about the natural world!

GINLC Photo Contest

All local high school students are eligible. Cash prizes.

Deadline: May 9, 2019

TAKE IT OUTSIDE

Open to all high school students

Nature & Wildlife Photo Contest
2018-2019

Students may enter photos captured locally that inspire us to appreciate and steward our environment:
air, water, land, wildlife, resources and ecosystems.

3 Categories
Creatures, Critters & Crawly Things
Amazing Moments
Patterns & Textures

\$100 / Grand Prize
\$50 / FIRST Place in each category
\$40 / SECOND Place in each category
\$25 / THIRD Place in each category

Contest is limited to one entry per category. Total 3 per student
Enter starting Oct. 1, 2018 Deadline Thurs, May 9, 2019
All Digital. Enter at www.ginlc.org. Click on 'Photo Contest' for entry form

Sponsored by the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy www.ginlc.org

CATEGORIES:

(all digital)

- Creatures, Critters & Crawly Things
- Amazing Moments
- Patterns & Textures

Visit www.ginlc.org and click on Photo Contest for entry form and details.

Celebrating 25 Years!

Feedback from the Founders



We are continuing our 25th anniversary celebration by reaching out to our founders, some of whom have left Grosse Ile but retained their passion for conservation. Carol and Doug Woodring

now live in Ohio. Carol graciously responded to the Founders' questionnaire:

How they got involved? "I called far-sighted people who originally envisioned the organization and we got together at Ingo's ... waaaay back then!!"

Original goals? "They were much the same as today. To protect our vital green space and live within the bounds of what would enable the best quality of life."

Community reaction? "Very encouraging and all encompassing. The time was finally right. It was wonderful and so well received. Lectures were given, displays, art work, charts, we had it all!"

Your opinion of the GINLC, 25 years since its founding? "Whoa, is it that long ago? My. I think it's very impressive. We didn't have signs that showed what wonderful progress was being made in the beginning, we just did it. Now the population can see and appreciate even more what they are involved in."

What should the GINLC take on in the future? "I would hope that waterfront protection might be high on the list. Educating the public about what run-off can do to the precious water resource that we steward is all important. Much of the poor stewardship is quite innocent but the nitrogen overload from caring for lawns is a major factor. The key is ongoing education."

Additional comments? "We are in the process of finally putting an easement on our 22 acres of woodland and 18 acres of field with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. It sure feels good to stop woodland destruction and keep small farm businesses vital. We are giving them our mineral, gas and oil rights as well, so there will be no fracking on this piece of land! We both wish you continued success in your every endeavor."

— Carol & Doug Woodring

RED-TAILED HAWK, Continued from cover

LIFESTYLE: Red-tailed Hawks generally do not migrate further than southern Mexico. Some Buteo species migrate in flocks, with the record of 543,533 Broad-winged Hawks counted on Sept 17, 1999. Red-tails tend to migrate separately and only on days when weather conditions and winds are just right.

Pairs mate for life, but replacement of mates can be quite quick if one dies. Courtship behaviors include sky-dances, where the male flies high and then dives precipitously with half-closed wings, then checks and streaks upward again. The pair fly in circles in the sky, touching each other's wings. They engage in these displays at their first courtship and again to strengthen their pair-bond before breeding, which occurs from late winter to mid-spring.



NESTING: They nest in trees, on cliffs or man-made structures such as utility poles or cell towers. Both work on constructing the nest out of twigs. The female lines the interior with bark, pine needles, leaves, corn husks and other plant matter. Average size of the nest is 30 inches in diameter and 38 inches in height, but the inner bowl is only 15 inches across and 5 inches deep. There is one brood per season, with 1-3 whitish or buff colored eggs. The eggs hatch after 28-35 days of incubation, and the father continues to bring most of the food to the mother and

chicks who begin to leave the nest after 42-46 days. Last year, a red-tail juvenile in British Columbia was snatched for food but then adopted into a family of bald eagles!

VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES: Red-tailed Hawks are fairly common on Grosse Ile and throughout Michigan, especially along roadsides where they can be seen perching in trees and looking for prey.

DID YOU KNOW? Hollywood dubs the sound of a Red-tail in every scene featuring a Bald Eagle calling. Eagles have a high-pitched call that doesn't fit their image!

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*Lifetime Members

THANK YOU! Please advise if your name was omitted or misspelled so that we may correct our records.



GINLC ANNUAL MEETING is NOVEMBER 10th

**SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 10th**
10 am to noon
Grosse Ile Golf &
Country Club



PRESENTATION
by **Susan White**
**Detroit River International
Wildlife Refuge Manager,
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

The Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy will hold its annual membership meeting on Saturday, November 10th from 10 am to noon at the Grosse Ile Golf and Country Club. Attendees will learn about 2018 accomplishments, discuss 2019 plans and applaud the Conservationist of the Year.

Susan White will be the guest speaker. She is the new Refuge Manager for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Raised in Macomb County, she spent 30 years in conservation in Florida and the Caribbean, and most recently managing wildlife refuges in Hawaii. She will be speaking about her experiences and provide an update on the status of our local Refuge.

THE PUBLIC IS CORDIALLY INVITED.
A complimentary continental breakfast will be available. This is your chance to learn about and volunteer for the various projects & 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



FALL 2018
To sign up for a
work party call
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To make a
donation call
JOHN LEON
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