



**VOLUME 21
NUMBER 1**

the
VOYAGEUR

SPRING, 2013

the newsletter of the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy

*"In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught."
—Baba Dioum*

Birding 101 Class

Hickory Island Pavilion
29820 E. River, Grosse Ile
Sat., April 27 10AM

Wildlife Refuge

Volunteer Sign up & Training
BREAKFAST
St. Thomas Lutheran Church
Sat., May 4 9-11AM

**Earth Day Celebration
Photo Contest Awards**

Centennial Farm
Sun., May 5 1-4PM

**Gibraltar Bay Unit
Wildlife Refuge**

Open every Sunday 1-4PM
May 5- October 27
Also open: 4-8PM on the
following dates:
7/11, 7/25, 8/8, 8/22

**Kids Discovery
Springtime Stroll**

Refuge/Airport
Nature Area
Sun., May 12 2PM

**Birds of the Bay
Refuge/Airport**

Nature Area
Sat., May 18 9AM

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT by Liz Hugel

As I start a new stint as president of the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy, I want to thank all of our donors for the support of our grass roots organization. I want to also recognize the terrific leadership of our past president Doug Thiel. Under his direction, many projects around town have strengthened the Conservancy and truly improved the quality of life on Grosse Ile. We're happy that Doug serves as Vice-President this year and will continue to lead or advise on several special projects in the works. Additional GINLC leadership changes include the election of John Leon as Treasurer and Paul Gloor as Secretary. We thank Victoria Murphy for her past service as Secretary and are pleased that she will continue to serve as an Executive Committee member and be active on Education Committee programs. Sincere thanks go out to our past Treasurer Ken Tilp for the many contributions he made over his years as a GINLC board member, from his adept handling of our finances to his leadership and participation in countless stewardship activities. We hope to see him around at upcoming stewardship parties.



GINLC President Liz Hugel takes over from Immediate Past President Doug Thiel

The board and committees established goals early in the year and have been incredibly busy planning and applying for grants to help sponsor our projects. The Education Committee, with Courtney Solenberger-McNeill leading the way, has already hosted several events, both indoors and out. Be sure to read the synopsis in the Education Corner inside. In preparation for their Earth Day Celebration event, board director Greg Roginski has updated our GINLC property map. It includes most of the township, state, and federal government properties too—see the centerfold.

Our Stewardship Committee, co-chaired by Fred Pepper and Eric Michael, has already performed our annual property inspections and organized several spring cleanups. They've been working closely with a scout on plans for a butterfly garden at our Kobiljak-donated preserve on Thorofare.

New board member Art Payette is gearing up to start weekly stewardship work parties at the Gibraltar Bay Unit of the Wildlife Refuge and adjacent GI Airport nature areas. The Refuge will again be open this year on Sunday afternoons for your escape or wildlife observation pleasure from May through October. This summer we will phase in some Thursday afternoon/evening openings as well, so plan to stop by for a relaxing walk. If you want to sign up to volunteer at the refuge or learn more about it, join us and Visitor Services Manager Jamie Lanier for a light breakfast on Saturday May 4th at St. Thomas Lutheran Church.



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MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS



NATALIE RAY is currently working on her Master's degree in Education to pursue a career as a high school science teacher. She works part-time as a substitute teacher and is an Interpreter (naturalist) for the William G. Milliken State Park during the spring and summer months.

Natalie began her work at the Environmental Interpretive Center at U of M, Dearborn and at Lake Erie Metropark where she discovered her passion for sharing nature with others. For the past two years she has enjoyed leading

interpretive nature programs for the Conservancy. When she is not studying, teaching, or planning nature programs, Natalie enjoys birding, nature study, gardening, cooking, traveling, camping, and just about anything outdoors. She is also an active volunteer for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and the Organization for Bat Conservation. We look forward to having Natalie on the Education Committee where she will continue sharing her knowledge about Grosse Ile's unique natural features and wildlife.



ROBERTA ("BERT") URBANI and JOHN LEON have been transforming their property on Hickory Island into a native plant and wildlife friendly landscape since their arrival in 2009. These efforts and their immediate dedication to the Conservancy earned them the GINLC "Conservationists of the Year" award in 2010.



"BERT" URBANI will retire soon from DTE Energy after 32 years in the environmental field, half in the compliance group and the last 16 years coordinating DTE's voluntary environmental programs. These include the company's Green Team of environmental volunteers and overseeing its wildlife habitat programs. She is

on the board of The Greening of Detroit and the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance, and volunteers with those organizations as well as many others. Bert is a Michigan Conservation Steward through the MSU Extension program. She plans to use her experience to help the Conservancy reach its goals to protect our beautiful natural resources on Grosse Ile and raise awareness among island residents.

JOHN LEON is a GM retiree from Vehicle Architecture and active volunteer with the International Wildlife Refuge, Greening of Detroit, and Friends of the Detroit River. He helps with his grandson's robotics group at Friends School in Detroit and serves as the grounds chairperson of the Hickory Island Co. where he directs the upkeep of the infrastructure and facilities. He also does stained glass and home remodeling. John was elected Treasurer and will help with stewardship.

Both John and Bert enjoy kayaking around the islands of the lower Detroit River and bird-watching.



BARBARA THAYER Twenty-two years. That's how long Barbara has lived on Grosse Ile. "It doesn't seem possible," she says. She used to drive to teach Language Arts at Monroe Junior High School and to Monroe High School, and then retired. "No more driving on I-75 at 6:00AM" she says gleefully. "I am an avid reader (I'll read the back of a cereal box if nothing else is around) and always have at least two books in the wings. Vietnam has been one continuing subject that I read about."

Barbara has been trying for years to learn to play bridge well, yet continues to be a student. She is part of a knitting group, enjoys exercise, yard work, organizing family photos, and being with family. Her connection to the water on Grosse Ile and an interest in learning brings her to the Conservancy. "It is important to respect our environment and by serving on the Board I hope to do that," she says.



MICHELLE (“MICKEY”) BARTLETT lives on Voigt with her husband, Brian, and her two children, Nikki and RJ who attend Meridian and Park Lane Elementary Schools. Mickey developed her love for nature growing up in the country (Newport) on 22 acres. She and her

family were attracted to Grosse Ile by the unique natural resources, the great schools and bike paths. They moved to the island about 8 years ago. She loves living here and wants to protect our natural resources so that future generations can continue to appreciate island life.

Mickey is an attorney who practices in Ann Arbor, Michigan at Stevenson Keppelman Associates (“SKA”), a nationally-recognized, boutique law firm that specializes in employee benefits.



PETER KANTZ and his wife Betsy have lived on Grosse Ile for more than 30 years, and raised their four children here (Meggan, Edward, John and Kaylin). His son Edward, of Louisiana, took the appreciation he attained for the natural environment by growing up on the island to become a Civil Engineer for the US Department of Agriculture in the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Peter has been a member of GINLC for the past five years and has served in Grosse Ile Government in various capacities for the past seven years. He is retired from Ford Motor Company and plans to help GINLC with the stewardship of existing properties.

He also will be working with other GINLC personnel and Township personnel on special projects to create better access to the island’s natural resources for all Township residents.

Peter’s hobbies include running, biking, kayaking, softball and other outdoor activities.



ART PAYETTE was born in Wyandotte and first moved to Grosse Ile when he was 15. After raising three boys in Southgate, he and his wife of 47 years, Doreene, were fortunate to find a home on Hickory Island and return.

Art enjoys photography, boating, the outdoors and the wildlife on the Island where birds, deer, turkey,

and swan abound. He and Doreene enjoy traveling and cruised the Panama Canal in 2012. Art is a member of Sacred Heart Church and the Knights of Columbus. He started his work-life at Great Lakes Steel, attended and graduated from the University of Detroit and finished his professional career as an Account Manager in the automotive parts business.

Art worked with GINLC at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife’s Gibraltar Bay Unit this past summer and is looking forward to working there again this year. He is on the Education Committee, and is happy for the privilege of serving on the Board.



REFUGE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

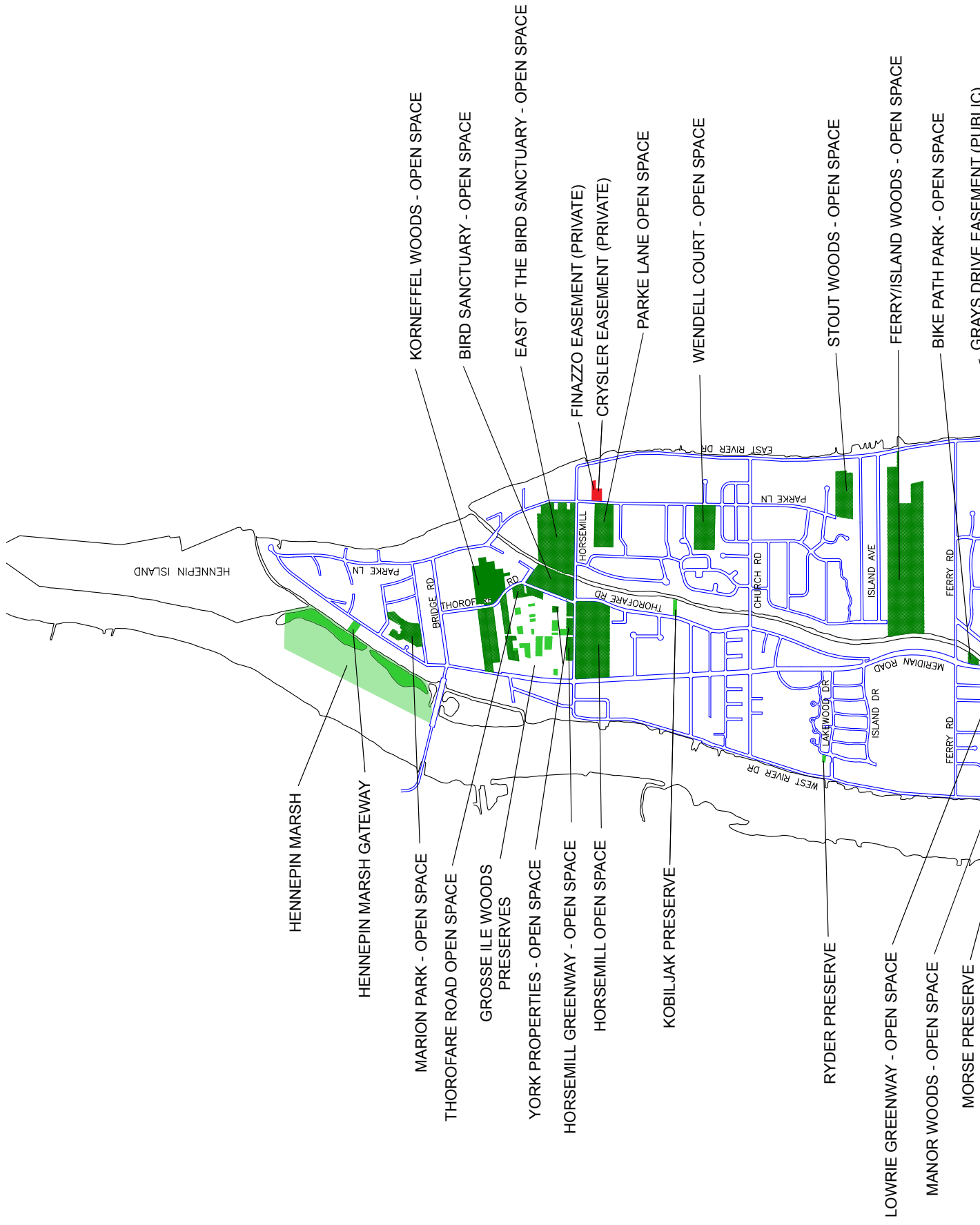
The Gibraltar Bay Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge will reopen on Sunday afternoons from 1-4PM starting Sunday, May 5, and several evenings during the summer.

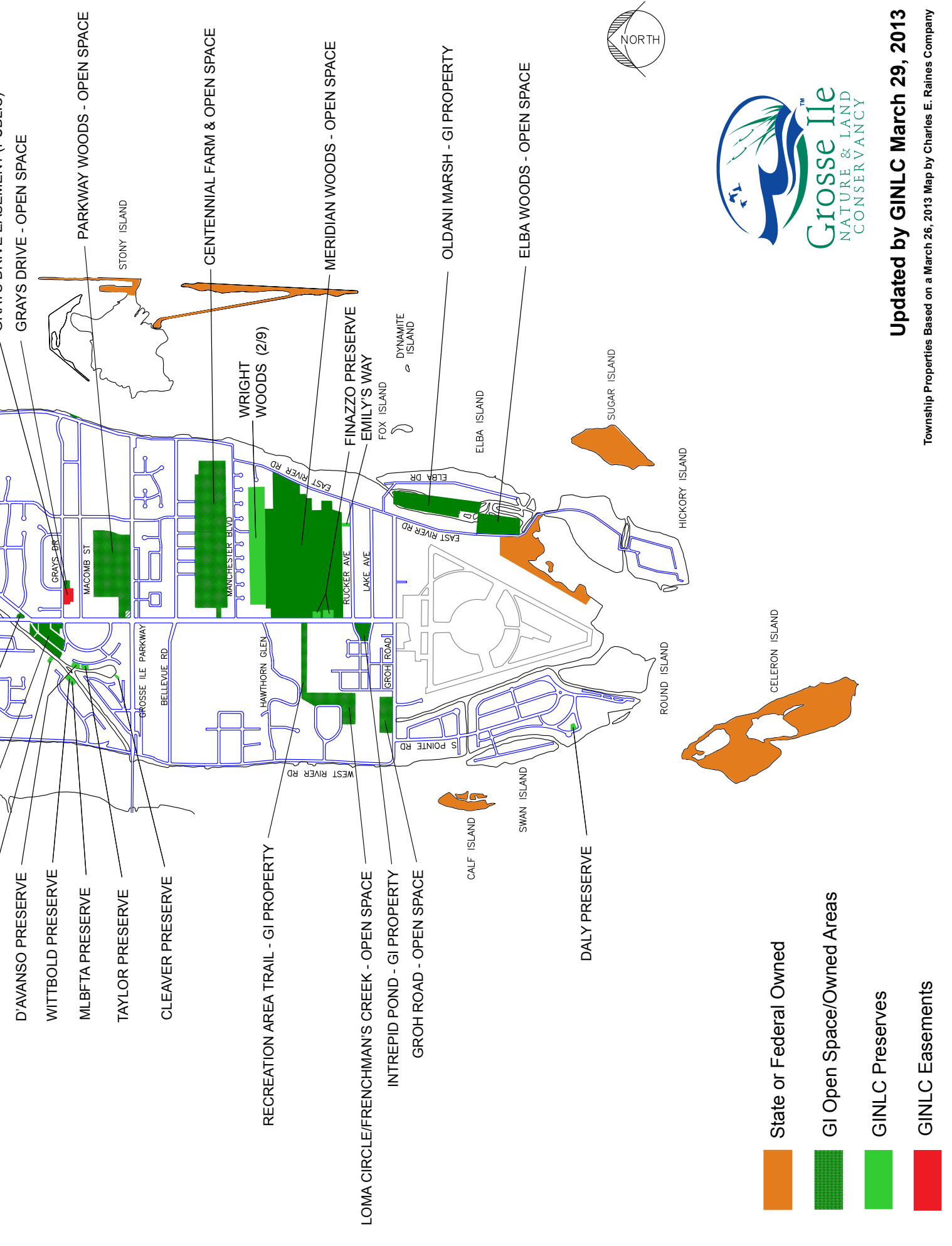
Volunteers will be needed to host each “Open House.” Volunteers are also needed for stewardship activities. Bring your date book and join us for breakfast on Saturday, May 4 at 9AM at St. Thomas Lutheran Church for sign-up and training. Contact Liz Hugel at liz.hugel@gmail.com with questions.

EAGLE PROJECT

Jagr Moskall from Boy Scout Troop 1261 is creating a small butterfly meadow as his Eagle Scout Award Project. If you have perennial plants that attract butterflies in your garden and wish to split them to share with him alert us at info@ginlc.org. Monetary donations would be greatly appreciated by Jagr, also. You can donate with the enclosed envelope, specifying that it’s for the “Scout Project.”

GROSSE ILE NATURE & LAND CONSERVANCY PRESERVES AND GROSSE ILE OPEN SPACE & OWNED AREAS





Updated by GINLC March 29, 2013
Township Properties Based on a March 26, 2013 Map by Charles E. Raines Company

What? is the GINLC Educational Team up to?

1. Developing a photography contest offered to high school students at Grosse Ile, Gibraltar, Carlson Trenton, Anderson Southgate and Riverview. (Deadline for submissions was April 22.)
2. Natalie Ray hosted a training session on March 23 for volunteers to learn about the 13 different species of frogs and toads that are found in Southeast Michigan and why it is important to survey them. The volunteer observers will be visiting sites around the island 3 times during the spring when frogs and toads are breeding to conduct the surveys.
3. Distributing applications to our high school staff and students for the Bruce Jones Memorial Scholarship and the Environmental Project Awards. (Deadline for application—April 30)
4. The design and development of an Earth Day program (May 5) which will include a tour of select GINLC preserves.
5. GINLC guided walks at the Wildlife Refuge/Airport Nature Area are being planned.
6. ...and the biggest project!
—the development of an outdoor learning space in an existing courtyard at the Middle School. This community partnership will feature Michigan native plants, a garden, and butterfly habitat. GINLC is working with Principal Dave Tucker, science teacher, Lou Lafayette and many others in the visualization and completion of this project.

To learn about such learning spaces, members of the Education Committee attended a workshop titled "Starting and Sustaining a School Garden" at the Tollgate Education Center in Novi and toured a rain garden at the Dearborn Environmental Interpretive Center.



RED FOX by Doug Thiel

Characteristics:

The red fox has an elongated body and relatively short limbs with orangish-red fur on its back, sides and head. It has white fur under its neck chest and a long bushy tail tipped in white. It is 30 -54 inches

long with the tail making up over half of its length. With pointed black ears and black legs and feet, the Red Fox typically weighs between 11 and 15 pounds. They trot at a speed of 6–13 km/h, and have a maximum running speed of 50 km/h.

Red foxes have been known to live 10 to 12 years in captivity but live on average three years in the wild. It's resourcefulness has earned it a legendary reputation for intelligence and cunning.

SHOT OF THE DAY by Barbara Thayer

Isn't this a beautiful day. The sun is out! This is the perfect day. Wow, it is so great to be outside. Sunday, March 10, 2013. My husband and I picking up sticks, thinking about the leaves blown into the bushes. It was a perfect day to work outside and we just had to keep repeating the mantra over and over. After all, it really was perfect. Ralph spotted something swimming in the water. Moving steady and strong around chunks of ice, large and small, that have made their way down the Detroit River. A brown sleek something. We thought probably a muskrat. I tossed my rake down and followed. It started heading inland. Yes, come this way. Then I saw a fish in its mouth. This brown sleek... yes, a muskrat. With a large fish. Get the camera. Here I am in the yard where everything good happens and I don't have my camera. I reached in my pocket and took three pictures with my I-phone. Too far away. I hurried back to the house. All the front french doors locked because we had come lakeside with the tools from the garage in the back. Around the house. Take off my muddy shoes. The yard is soggy in low places. Into the far computer room. I found my Nikon with the 70-200 lens in the small camera case. Put on my clogs--quicker. Around the other side of the house because that might be quicker also. Across the yard. That muskrat couldn't hear me. My steps were quiet on the partly frozen front yard. Down four steps onto my neighbors steel dock. My clogs still made no noise. I hoisted the camera, steadied myself on a large, rusty metal post and started to shoot. The muskrat was on a small piece of ice eating the fish. The camera wouldn't take a picture. I quickly looked over the controls. No juice!! That hardly ever happens. I always make sure I have a full battery. Don't waste time. Back into the house. Off with the clogs. I found a fresh battery in my travel camera bag and opened the battery compartment, slide the battery in place. Out to the neighbors dock again. Same route. That muskrat was still there waiting for me! I took lots of shots, raw and jpeg. A muskrat looks different through the lens. Everything does. I moved when the muskrat moved. I noticed he didn't like it when the wind came up a bit and the icy water rolled onto his piece of ice. Here's the shot:



TRUMPETER SWANS BACK

A recent article in the Detroit Free Press (1/20/13), written by the Michigan Audubon Society, said that Trumpeter Swans, the only native swan that breeds in Michigan, has made a comeback, after being considered to be threatened. In the past, they were hunted for their skin and their long flight feathers. Also a factor in the decline of their population was the lack of wetland habitats.

A swan reintroduction program, initiated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, along with like-minded conservation groups, had the goal of "having three self-sustaining populations in Michigan of at least 200 swans from the year 2000."

Michigan now has more than 500 Trumpeter Swans, a testament to the success of the conservationists' efforts.

GROSSE ILE NATURE AND LAND CONSERVANCY SCHOLARSHIP

The Conservancy has established a scholarship in honor of Dr. Bruce D. Jones, one of the founding members of the Conservancy. Graduating Grosse Ile High School Seniors may compete for this annual scholarship funded by the Dr. Bruce D. Jones Memorial fund. The annual scholarship gives \$500 to a deserving applicant.

The scholarship will be awarded based on the student's participation in projects or activities associated with protecting or enhancing the natural environment and his/her plans to do so in the future. For complete information, applications may be obtained at the High School counseling office or at www.GINLC.org.

THANK YOU!

MAJOR DONORS:

BASF Corporation

DTE Energy Foundation
Employee Matching Fund

GIFTS:

In honor of Dr. Bruce Jones and
Richard and Rosalind Meyer
The Meyer Family Foundation

In memory of Dr. Bruce Jones
Gordon & Blair Jones
Liz Hugel and Manfred Egerer
Downriver Surgery Center

WINTER WAYS OF THE BAY

by Natalie Ray

The "Winter Ways of the Bay" program was held February 10 at the Gibraltar Bay Unit of the Wildlife Refuge. Conditions during the winter months provide great opportunities for nature observers to put their detective skills to work, and this day was no exception!

We studied the tracks left behind in the snow from the previous night's animal activities, which included squirrel, rabbit, and White-footed Mouse tracks. We also observed an egg case from a Praying Mantis, full of hundreds of eggs patiently waiting for summer time to hatch and emerge from their case as mini-mantids. We also discussed what the muskrats are up to during the winter, and according to the number of muskrat lodges visible in the bay, there are many active occupants beneath the ice! Not surprising, we also witnessed an immature Bald Eagle fly over (thanks to a few observant attendees.) Being primarily fish eaters, Bald Eagles are quite common in the lower Detroit River area during the winter months. Taking the time to look up every once in a while this time of year can certainly pay off!

Stay tuned as we will be offering many additional educational opportunities throughout the year.

The first Frog and Toad Survey on the island and an educational session for participants was held at the Centennial Farm. Participants enjoyed learning about our local amphibians and made a valuable contribution to the scientific study of these creatures.

For more information on educational opportunities and upcoming programs offered by GINLC, please contact Natalie Ray – 734-624-7993.

Hope to see you soon!



Those who took the winter walk learned how to identify tracks of different species.

Reflections from the President, continued

If you haven't made a donation for 2013 will you please consider doing so today? If you have time to volunteer, drop us a note and let us know how you can assist. We have an ambitious agenda this year and we can always use extra financial and volunteer help to be successful.

I hope to see you at one of our events this year! If you're not on our email distribution list for event announcements or work parties and want to get in the loop, please send me an email at info@ginlc.org or give me a call at 734-552-8950.



Students of all ages came to learn about frogs and toads and our survey plans.

Congratulations to Jeff Bouwer, a Grosse Ile resident and teacher at Weiss Elementary in Woodhaven! We were delighted to grant him a GINLC Environmental Project Award in memory of Dr. Bruce Jones to support the Weiss Salmon Project. *Read more in our next issue!*

MICHIGAN SPRING WEATHER

by Ingo Hasserodt

Who can forget the balmy spring weather of March, 2012, when for 10 days the temperature rose above 70 degrees, topping out at a record 86 degrees? We were spoiled by warm breezes from the South.

There was a heavy price to pay when the April frost killed the immature cherry and apple blossoms, devastating the fruit crop in Michigan. Barely enough local cherries survived to celebrate the Cherry Festival in Traverse City.

One might suspect an evolutionary flaw of those species, but the real explanation is that neither cherries or apples are native. They evolved in Asia where the warmth of spring is a more reliable signal to bloom. In Michigan, a killing frost is possible until early May.

Our native plants are not as easily fooled by a warm early spring. They use the length of daylight as a safer signal to bloom. In most years the cold water of Lake Michigan reduces spring temperatures in the fruit growing region of West Michigan. Lake Erie provides the same benefit to Grosse Ile, makes the island an excellent place to grow native fruit.

To receive event notices and newsletters by email, contact us at info@ginlc.org



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