



VOYAGEUR

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GROSSE ILE NATURE & LAND CONSERVANCY

“When you are a skunk, you learn how to hold your breath for a long time.”
~ Pepe Le Pew

→ You may not see them, but their presence is unmistakable: the skunk’s stink, which can be detected from over a mile away, makes it perhaps our most easily recognized wild animal, as does its black and white-striped coat. Its reputation varies from its characterization by the Friends of the Rouge as an “important citizen of the watershed” to its inclusion on the State of Michigan’s “Nuisance Wildlife” list. Read on to decide whether you consider this island resident, who you have surely seen or smelled here on Grosse Ile on a regular basis, friend or foe.

HABITAT & RANGE:

The habitat of the striped skunk, the primary species found in the United States, covers much of North America, from southern Canada into northern Mexico. Skunks are highly adaptable and can be found in open agricultural lands, woods, and deserts, and of course, suburban and urban areas.

Skunks are nocturnal or crepuscular (active at twilight) in habit. In the

NATIVE SPECIES OF GROSSE ILE
Striped Skunk
(*Mephitis mephitis*)

BY PATRICIA SELBY



wild, they nest in ground burrows, digging their own or taking over those abandoned by groundhogs. In suburbia, skunks burrow

under sheds and decks or may take up residence under a porch or in a woodpile. Skunks huddle up in the winter in their dens, but

do not truly hibernate. You may see them out during the winter looking for food.

DIET:

If you have never had to treat a pet after it was sprayed by a skunk, you might appreciate that its diet of grubs and other insects, small rodents, and snakes are just a natural form of pest control. The omnivorous animals are both bane and blessing in the garden, as they dig up and eat the larvae of destructive garden pests, but will also eat grains, fruits, berries, and buds. They are also known predators of ground-dwelling insects such as yellow jackets. My family once benefited from a skunk’s overnight eradication of a ground hornet nest, leaving behind only a large hole and empty comb pieces scattered on the lawn after its feast.

CHARACTERISTICS:

Skunks may weigh anywhere between 1.5 and 12 pounds and may be as much as 32 inches long (including tail).

— Continued on page 6

4/13+14

John C. Jackson Resource Center Grand Opening
Sat, April 13, 11am-3pm
& Sun, April 14th 12-3pm

4/14

Backyard Birding
Sun, April 14, 8-9:30am
Airport Natural Area (ANA)

4/20

Island Cleanup Stewardship Event
Sat, April 20, 10am-12pm
John C. Jackson Resource Center (RC)

COMING UP

4/21

Oriole Talk

Sun, April 21, 3pm @ RC

5/4

Rabbit, Ribbit:

Michigan Frogs

Sat, May 4, 1-2:30pm
Meridian Woods

6/9

Slithering:

Snakes Need Friends, Too

Sun, June 9, 1-2:30pm
GI Bird Sanctuary

7/20

Wetlands are Wonderful

Sat, July 20, 1-2:30pm @ ANA

8/4

Butterflies

Sun, August 4, 1-2:30pm @ ANA

9/21

Birds of Prey

Sat, Sept 21, 1-2:30pm @ RC

10/26

Owl Prowl

Sat, Oct 26, 7-8:30pm
@ Centennial Farm

11/16

**GINLC Annual
Membership Meeting**

Sat, Nov 16, 10:30am-12pm
@ GIGCC

11/16

Creatures of the Night

Sat, Nov 16, 1-2:30pm @ RC

12/15

Cold-Blooded Creatures

Sun, Dec 15, 1-2:30pm @ RC

Reflections From the President

BY PAUL GLOOR

2024 is here, and after a successful 2023, our sights are set on new plans. The education team has crafted an extensive program list, bringing in experts from Huron-Clinton Metroparks and WildBirds Unlimited to enhance our offerings. This year, we're expanding our program locations, with the John C. Jackson Resource Center being a notable addition. Explore our program lineup on our website at www.ginlc.org/upcoming-events.

At the Dr. Bruce Jones Preserve, walking trails are marked, and an informational kiosk has been installed. Soon, interpretive signage will provide self-study opportunities on native trees and points of interest.

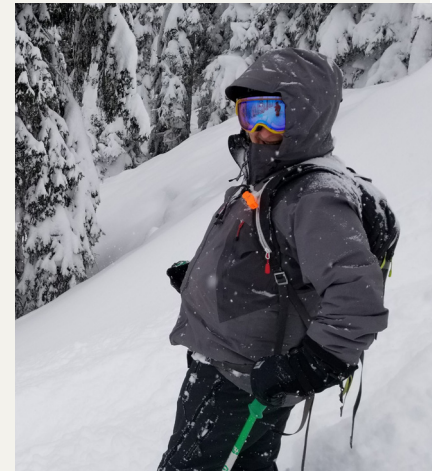
Excitingly, the Resource Center will host an Open House on Saturday, April 13 from 11am-3pm and Sunday, April 14 from noon-3pm. It's becoming a hub for our board and committee meetings. We're organizing materials and records from various locations on Grosse Ile, now properly inventoried at the Resource Center. Public amenities like benches and interpretive signage in the naturalistic garden are on the horizon.

The Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve restoration continues, focusing on removing invasive species, particularly phragmites — a multi-year endeavor. In 2024, we aim to design plantings to replace invasives with native species.

Being asked to be part of the steering committee for the Grosse Ile Master Plan, last updated over 20 years ago, is an honor. The master plan helps guide the township and its various committees and commissions in their work. Your input is crucial; seize the opportunities to shape the township's future. You can share your thoughts at <https://grosse-ile-mp-smithgroup.hub.arcgis.com/> today.

Organizationally, we're committed to maintaining GINLC's vibrancy. Identifying key roles, ensuring familiarity, and documenting procedures are ongoing. Though less glamorous than tree planting, it's vital for our long-term health.

Thank you for supporting GINLC. Exciting things are unfolding in 2024 — join us in making them memorable!



*We look forward to seeing
you at our Grand Opening
April 13 & 14th!*



Stewardship volunteers clearing debris from their work session at Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve.

Stewardship Update

BY PETER KANTZ

Stewardship activities slow down during the winter. The Monday Morning Stewardship Crew, however, was able to keep busy by working outside at Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve, preparing the site for future restoration projects by clearing debris and removing stumps. Additionally, plenty of work was carried out at the Resource Center. Inside the building, cabinets were installed, shelves were built, and floor moldings replaced. Outside the building, drainage was improved along the east side of the building and along the entire eastern boundary of the property.

After a typical Southeast Michigan winter, spring has finally arrived. Plants that have been dormant

for months are beginning to sprout and turn green. Animals that had gone south for the winter are returning, others that stayed behind are emerging from their winter homes. Stewardship activities that had been hindered by the winter weather are kicking into high gear. Tools are being brought out of storage and made ready for the work ahead.

Aside from the normal spring, summer, and fall maintenance tasks at our nature preserves and the Airport Nature Area, stewardship activities this year will concentrate on the restoration of Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve. This restoration project began in earnest last year, and the fruits of those labors start to become apparent

this spring. It is a multi-year project, however, and there is still much to be done. Other projects scheduled for this year are refurbishment of displays at the Meridian trailhead, creation of a viewing area at the Bruce Jones Preserve, and sign installation at various locations. We will be aided with some of these tasks by other organizations. Cameron Waszkiewicz, a junior in high school, will create and install signs at the Bruce Jones Preserve as his Eagle Scout Project. Team Rubicon, a veteran-led humanitarian organization, will help with tree and brush removal.

This will be a busy year for stewardship. If you would like to help, please contact us. We are always in need of more volunteers.

SIGNIFICANT DONATIONS

Blair and Gordon Jones

Meyer
Family Foundation
In honor of
Dr. Bruce and Joan Jones

Paul and Martha
Nussbaum

The Geist Family
For a bench at the RC
dedicated to GI teachers
past and present

Marcia Aller
For a bench at the
RC dedicated to
the memory of Ted Aller

Jonathan Hodge

Marty and Loretta Daly

Joe and Maria Daly

Victoria and Dan
Murphy

THANK YOU
to all those who
have donated
and continue to
donate to GINLC



Giving Made Easy

Enroll your Kroger Plus card to benefit the Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy! Go to kroger.com/communityrewards to enroll (our organization number is AW710).



2022 Annual Membership Meeting

BY PAUL GLOOR

November marks the arrival of our annual GINLC membership meeting — a pivotal moment to apprise both our members and the wider public about the Conservancy’s achievements in 2023, discuss forthcoming plans for 2024, acknowledge esteemed contributors, elect new board members, and host an engaging guest speaker.

A robust turnout of over ninety attendees gathered at the Grosse Ile Golf and Country Club—an exceptional showing!

STATE OF THE CONSERVANCY

President Paul Gloor delivered an overview of the Conservancy’s status. Throughout 2023, our focus centered on four key projects, each either completed or significantly advanced:

Collaborating with Grosse Ile Township and the Commerce Park Commission, GINLC successfully acquired and installed essential signage and barriers, ensuring the safe and continuous access to the Airport Natural Area (ANA) from dawn to dusk, every day of the year. This negates the necessity for GINLC volunteer hosts to open the ANA solely on Sunday afternoons.

Our stewardship team made remarkable progress in eradicating invasive species such as phragmites, honeysuckle, and buckthorn that had encroached upon the Hennepin Marsh Gateway. Efforts are underway to restore the habitat by introducing new plants.

A usage plan for the Bruce Jones Preserve has been proposed. We’ve identified native trees, established woodland trails, and secured public parking access through an agreement with GI Township. Plans are in motion for the

installation of kiosks, benches, and interpretive signage.

The renovations at the GINLC John C. Jackson Resource Center (8801 Macomb St.) have concluded. The front of the building now features a landscaped garden highlighting stormwater management and native plant options. The conference room, assembly area, and workroom are now operational for GINLC’s use.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

The GINLC introduced the Conservationist of the Year award to honor individuals exceeding expectations in furthering our mission of educating the public and conserving Grosse Ile’s natural resources. This year, board member Peter Kantz was recognized as the 2023 Conservationist of the Year for spearheading the renovation project at 8801 Macomb Street, establishing the John C. Jackson Resource Center.

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER

This year, we were honored to have Dr. John Hartig, a Great Lakes scientist, former refuge manager, author, and Grosse Ile resident as our guest speaker. Dr. Hartig addressed the topic “Saving the Conservation Crescent.” This arc-shaped region encompasses Stony Island, Sugar Island, Bois Blanc Island, Gibraltar Bay, Celeron Island, Humbug Island, and Marsh—a stretch that faced development threats in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Dr. Hartig’s enlightening presentation was recorded by Scott Tobias and is available on the GINLC YouTube channel.

NEW GINLC BOARD MEMBERS

GINLC was lucky enough to elect 6 new board members at our Annual Meeting in November. Get to know the newest BOD members working to protect our island below!



Joshua Gratz

Josh grew up in Southgate, Michigan, and attended Wayne State University in Detroit. Over the past 14 years, his career has taken him across the country. Josh and his wife relocated to Grosse Ile, MI in November of 2022 after falling in love with the historic Tudor they purchased, and wanted to be part of Grosse Ile's rich history of green space and community. He is a Director of Sales for an AI Software solution and has a passion for "future fitting" businesses and people. When not working, you can find him working on their house, attending a football game (Go Lions!) or at Island Athletics lifting weights.



Liz Hugel

Liz and her family moved to Grosse Ile in 1999 after commuting for many years from Ann Arbor to Wyandotte. Liz was first nominated to the GINLC board at the annual meeting in 2002. She served as President of the Conservancy from 2007 and 2015. Last year,

Liz retired from her job as a Technical Manager at BASF where she had specialized in analytical testing to support environmental, health and safety. She spent most of this year helping take care of her newborn grandchild in Virginia, but is now back on Grosse Ile and ready to contribute again to the Conservancy and our shared passion of preserving and stewarding our natural resources.



Victoria Murphy

Victoria is returning to the GINLC board after serving 2 terms, ending in 2017. She is a volunteer at Community Grown Gardens in Grosse Ile and a member of Impact 100 Metro Detroit, a women's philanthropic organization that seeks to support transformation through collective giving of high impact grants. She is a former board member of the Grosse Ile Educational Foundation, recently finished a 3-year term on the Friends of the Detroit River board, and retired from PwC in December 2021. She and her husband, Dan, have lived in Grosse Ile for 35 years and raised their 3 children, Drew, Ellen and Jack, here. She looks forward to returning to the GINLC to help steward the natural resources of our community.



Jenna Moxlow

Jenna was first drawn to this community because it reminded her of where she grew up: deep in the woods of West Branch, Michigan. When her now-husband brought her home to "meet the family" 7 years ago, she instantly knew that this is where she would want to settle down and raise a family; and now, she and her husband are doing just that, as they are expecting their first child in May. Jenna looks forward to helping to not only be a good steward of this island herself, but to have her children grow alongside her, learning firsthand how to do the same. Jenna has extensive work experience in various forms of marketing, having had a two-year focus on Communications in undergrad, and also having run her own marketing business for several years – which focused on helping to build and launch marketing strategies for other small businesses.



Nicole McMillan

Nicole moved to Michigan with her husband, a native of Trenton, to be near aging

family and to raise their growing family in downriver Michigan. On first visiting Grosse Ile, she recognized the unique and special nature of the island, wanting to not only raise a family on the island but to also ensure it's protected for their children's children and the generations to come. When not consulting and raising her 3 boys, she attends births as a certified birth doula. She also enjoys making pinatas, gardening and practicing yoga. The McMillans love everything about island life and living in Michigan, from being out on their boat to skiing the Michigan slopes.



Johanne Wilson

Johanne is 10-year resident of Grosse Ile, and is married with two sons. She enjoys being outside with her family: camping, sailing, hiking and mushroom hunting. Johanne also is an avid gardener (and composter) and loves living on Grosse Ile because it offers the best trails for running right outside her front door. Professionally, Johanne works at BASF on the ChemCycling® project. She has been with BASF for 17 years, and prior to that she worked in the automotive industry for 13 years. Johanne has a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from McGill University and an MBA from Kellogg School of Management.

THINK SPRING

BY BERT URBANI

As our climate inexorably changes and we experience weirder and weirder weather, it's easy to get confused and jump into lawn and garden activities when some warm breezes blow. But resist that urge and DON'T SPRING INTO ACTION!

SPRING DOs & DON'Ts

DO:

- Put on your t-shirt and flip-flops and go outside
- Get out your pruners and prune the species that require pruning before new growth starts, such as dogwood, hydrangea (too late! mine have started), rose, trumpet vine, and others. You can visit growhausmn.com's pruning guide for more info!
- Sit outside in the sun and plan your garden and lawn, such as how much turf grass you will remove and replace with native plants that beautify your property and attract pollinators.

DON'T:

- Fertilize or let your lawn care company fertilize your lawn until the ground temperature is 60 degrees F.
- Fertilize unless you have tested your soil and know that it is deficient in nutrients and what those nutrients are. Visit homesoiltest.msu.edu/ for info about getting your soil tested.
- "Clean up" those flower beds of leaves and stems from last year at all, or at least until the temperature is a consistent 50+ degrees. Beneficial insects can be overwintering in those beds. Some bees overwinter in hollow stems, and some cocoons look exactly like dried leaves.
- Plant annuals or perennials until the ground is 50-60 degrees F. If you attended the GINLC Winter Sowing workshop on Dec 10, your seedlings may be appearing, but don't take them out of the milk jugs and plant them yet!



Skunk kits taking in the view from their burrow. Below: Skunk demonstrating its pre-spray warning stance.

Continued from cover

They breed in late winter and have litters of 2 to 7 "kits" after two months' gestation.

SELF-DEFENSE:

As cute as some people find them, skunks' self-defense method is reason enough to keep our distance, even if they spray only as a last resort. Baby skunks start secreting the oily musk at eight days old and can spray at a month, so don't assume that adorable little kit is any less of a hazard than its parents. Skunks have several methods of warning before they resort to spraying: pay attention to foot-stomping, teeth-clicking, and tail-raising, all of which it tries first to ward off a threat.

If you do have a pet who has been sprayed by a skunk's top defensive method, do not hose them down! Water binds the oil to a pet's fur. Instead, make a mixture of 1 quart of 3%



hydrogen peroxide, 1/4 cup baking soda, and 1 teaspoon liquid dishwashing soap, and wash them with rubber gloves immediately outside.

Skunks serve as your own personal garden pest removal, and do not want to spray you — they truly want to mind their own business. As with most of the wild animals on Grosse Ile, a healthy respect and distance is the best way to enjoy this fellow citizen of the watershed.

Update on Dr. Bruce Jones Preserve

BY DOUG THIEL

The Bruce Jones Preserve property, located at the southwest corner of Meridian and Bridge Roads, was purchased in early 2022 by the GINLC. It was named in honor of Dr. Bruce D. Jones, who was a founding member and former President of the GINLC. This property is highly valuable ecologically because of the many varied habitats that exist there, including some offshore islands, marsh areas, and vernal ponds. It provides a valuable habitat for a variety of amphibians, birds, mammals, and reptiles. There are also many large native tree specimens (some over 200 years old) on the property, including Red Oak, White Oak, Swamp White Oak, Shagbark Hickory, Hackberry, Ironwood, and Eastern Cottonwood.

There has been a significant amount of activity that has happened at the Dr. Bruce D. Jones Preserve since the GINLC was able to acquire the 15.8 acre ecologically valuable parcel early in 2022. After several visits to the Preserve and an in-depth discussion by GINLC Board members, a number of Preserve objectives were established.

A management plan was developed to guide the

organization on completing projects at the preserve that would support the Preserve objectives. Specific elements included the following:

► *Provide access to parking for visitors to the Preserve.*

This has been achieved through an agreement established with the Township to use Township-owned property adjacent to the Preserve at the northwest corner of the preserve off of Bridge Road. (9331 Bridge Rd, Grosse Ile Township).

► *Development of a walking trail with interpretive signs covering the significant ecological features in the Preserve.*

The trail route was laid out with the assistance of Chris Lehr of Nativescapes, an ecological consulting firm. The trail has now been established by GINLC volunteers and key ecological features in the Preserve have been identified. An informational kiosk has been installed at the trailhead to provide key information about the GINLC and the Preserve. This kiosk was constructed and installed by Cole Gilbert as an Eagle Scout project during the summer and fall of 2023. Cole is a member of Troop 1261 on Grosse Ile.

Cameron Waszkiewicz of Troop 1051 in Allen Park will be working on an additional Eagle Scout project at the Preserve involving the construction and installation of nature interpretive signs for visitors highlighting the important ecological features at the Preserve. The text for the signs is being developed by Grosse Ile High School students in cooperation with GINLC personnel. Cameron's project is anticipated to be completed by the end of summer 2024.

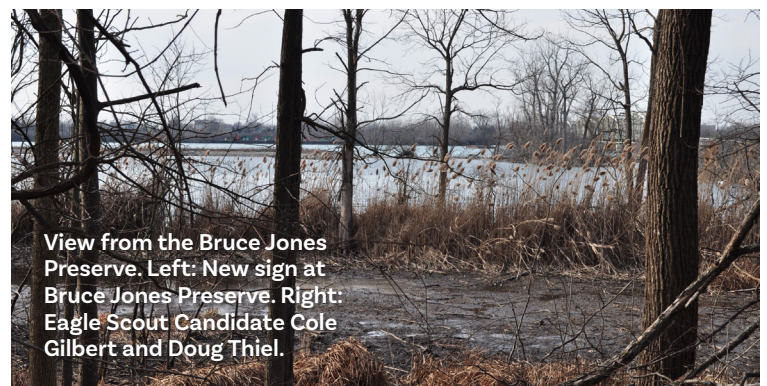
► *Completion of a Detroit River observation platform with interpretive signs is in*

the early stages of review by GINLC personnel. In the future, GINLC will also be considering a Forested Wetland Observation Platform and interpretive sign.

► *Removal of invasive plant species in the Preserve.* It is anticipated that this goal will be completed during the spring and summer of 2024.

► *Installation of GINLC Preserve signs to highlight the location of the Dr. Bruce Jones Preserve.* Signs were installed in the spring of 2023 along Meridian and Bridge Roads.

The GINLC looks forward to the completion of all of these planned improvements at the Preserve to enhance the visitor experience at this beautiful Preserve.



View from the Bruce Jones Preserve. Left: New sign at Bruce Jones Preserve. Right: Eagle Scout Candidate Cole Gilbert and Doug Thiel.



EARTH DAY: Island Cleanup Stewardship Event

SATURDAY, APRIL 20
10 am - NOON
MEET AT JCJ RESOURCE CENTER
8801 Macomb

Take action to help the planet this Earth Day. Please volunteer with GINLC in this Kiwanis-sponsored event as we clean up our GINLC preserves around the island!

Contact GINLC.gi@gmail.com
for more information.

COMING UP

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Airport Natural Area (ANA)

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Sun, June 9, 1-2:30pm
GI Bird Sanctuary



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SPRING 2024

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P.O. Box 12
Grosse Ile, MI 48138

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stewardship and understanding of the natural resources in
the Township of Grosse Ile and surrounding area

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