

## CALENDAR

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

28820 E. River Rd.  
Remains open dawn  
to dusk, year round

### GINLC EVENTS

#### AMAZING AMERICAN LOTUS

Sun, Aug 16 @ 1:00pm

**CANCELLED**

The following events are currently planned, and will take place provided that the USFWS authorizes groups at the GBU and the coronavirus in Michigan has been controlled sufficiently to place the state in a phase which permits groups larger than 10 people to gather.

#### INSECT INVESTIGATIONS

Sun, Sept 27 @ 1pm, GBU  
This kid-friendly event will feature the bugs of our region, the good, the bad, the ugly, and the CUTE!

EVENTS cont'd on page 2

ANDREW CANNIZZARO (CC BY 2.0)



## NATIVE SPECIES OF GROSSE ILE

# Eastern Fox Snake (*Pantherophis gloydi*)

BY LORI RIOPELLE

SNAKES! EEEK! They seemingly disguise themselves so you don't know they are in front of you until the last moment and then, Yikes! Why are these creatures able to create anxiety and raise blood pressure? Probably because they are so misunderstood. In reality, snakes are usually harmless to humans and provide many benefits.

Would you believe Michigan is home to only 18 species of snakes? (There are more than 3,000 species of snakes world-wide!) Of our 18 species, the only venomous snake in Michigan is the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*). Eastern Massasaugas are found in the Lower Peninsula (not in the U.P.) but none have been observed on Grosse Ile or in Wayne County. While all snakes play an important role in our ecosystem, let's focus on one that we are likely to encounter in our region – the Eastern Fox snake.

**CHARACTERISTICS:** The adult Eastern Fox can range from about 3 to 6 feet long. They have a bold pattern of black or dark brown blotches with scales that vary from a yellowish, gray, greenish, to a light brown. Fox snakes have a short, flattened snout and their head can vary in color from brown to a reddish color. The adult snake has a yellowish belly with a black checkerboard pattern. Young snakes will have a paler color with a deep brown blotch edged in black or dark brown and will have a dark mark in front of their eyes.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** The Eastern Fox snake can be found in the eastern side of the Lower Peninsula, northern Ohio and by our Canadian neighbors who border the lakes, in a variety of habitats. They prefer open marshy areas with vegetation such as cattails. They will also dwell in drier habitats such as beaches,

– continued on Page 11



*Thank You*  
**TO OUR  
SPECIAL DONORS**

*DTE Foundation  
grants through the  
Community Foundation  
for Southeast Michigan  
In recognition of the  
volunteer efforts of*

*Shirley Dein &  
Roberta Urbani*

*JOHN C. JACKSON  
For his generous  
donations*

*(See page 9 for more on  
Mr. Jackson)*

**IN MEMORY OF**  
*EDWARD SICKAFUS  
Mary Sue Sickafus*

# Reflections From the President

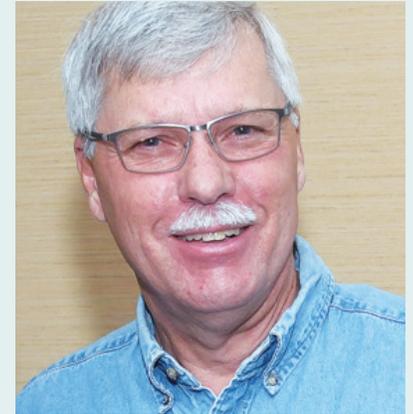
BY PETER KANTZ

It's been a challenging year so far with the COVID-19 pandemic, record high water levels on the Great Lakes, and the resultant disruptions to how GINLC serves the community. The pandemic has resulted in – NO Earth Day celebration, NO IslandFest booth, NO public display of our photo contest winners, NO opening of the Airport Wildlife Refuge on Sunday afternoons, and NO educational programs at the Wildlife Refuge. We miss these events that allow us to interact with our members and the public.

High water levels have caused us to close the Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve and necessitated the removal of the patio at Sunrise Park and sandbagging the shoreline to protect trees and retaining walls. After floating off into the Airport Lagoon, the observation platform at the Airport Wildlife Refuge is being rebuilt and relocated to higher ground. Every day we are working to protect what we have and to function within the constraints we face today.

Nature lets us know that humankind is just a small part of a much larger system, a system that we are only beginning to understand. Nature also helps us cope with the many challenges we face today. Take a deep breath and go outside, look at the trees, listen to the birds, go for a walk, take a healthy dose of Nature. We are fortunate to live in an area where it is easy to receive the healing power of Nature. Nature reminds us that some things are beyond our control and that most of what humankind has broken can be repaired. Rivers can be cleaned, industrial sites can be remediated, trees can be planted, and all forms of pollution can be reduced. Viruses and high water levels can be dealt with.

No one person is going to save the earth. No one person is going to save humankind. We must all do our share. Respect the earth, respect each other, and work together. The world depends on you and 8 billion other people. Make the right choices, work together, protect the environment, enjoy what we have and strive to make it better.



*“Nature  
reminds us  
that some  
things are  
beyond our  
control.”*

## GINLC EVENTS Continued

**“TAKE IT OUTSIDE”  
HIGH SCHOOL  
NATURE PHOTO  
CONTEST BEGINS**

**THE NATURE OF  
HALLOWEEN**  
Sun, Oct 25 @ 1:00pm, GBU  
Learn how nature  
figures into the traditions  
of Halloween

**GINLC ANNUAL  
MEETING**  
Sat, Nov 7 @ 10:00am  
Grosse Ile Golf &  
Country Club

**OWL PROWL**  
Sat, Nov 7 @ 6:30pm  
Centennial Farm



On July 22nd, the Trenton City Planning Commission held a public meeting via Zoom to allow citizens the opportunity to comment on the planned rezoning of the southern portion of the site from “Mixed Use” to a new zoning category called “Industrial Waterfront.” Under this proposed new zoning category certain industrial operations would be prohibited. Examples would be no storage of petroleum coke, explosives, radioactive materials, biohazards or toxic substances. Also excluded would be incineration, smelting, recycling, waste transfer and tire manufacturing operations. An intermodal shipping port would be allowed under this new zoning designation.

Over 330 people participated in the Zoom meeting. Approximately 35 of those participants (21 from Grosse Ile) verbally expressed their opposition to the new zoning class (and none expressed support), and 150 residents submitted written comments. Despite that, by a 5-4 decision later that evening, the Trenton City Planning Commission voted to recommend that the new zoning ordinance be passed by the Trenton City Council in its final rezoning decision.

There appears to be widespread opposition to the rezoning as evidenced by the Zoom meeting participation and the signatures of more than 2,700 Downriver residents on an on-line petition opposing the redevelopment of the site as an intermodal shipping port. The next Trenton City Council Meeting is scheduled for August 3rd; however, it is not known at the present time (July 25) if the rezoning proposal will be on the agenda.

# GINLC Update on McLouth Steel Site: Remediation & Redevelopment

BY DOUG THIEL

The following is a summary as of July 25 of milestones and significant activities that have been achieved over the past three months at the southern portion of the site.

It is estimated that 95% of the specified work at the south end of the site has been completed as required by the Administrative Settlement Agreement between the Moroun family business subsidiary MSC Land Co. LLC (MSC), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and the U.S. Department of Justice. This work included the demolition of 45 structures on the property, removal of asbestos-containing materials, wastes and PCBs from all structures before demolition, installation of a fence around the property, removal of water and sludges from 23 subsurface structures, investigation of five areas where PCBs were released, and assessment and reporting on options for stormwater management to eliminate uncontrolled flow to the Detroit River.

- Hazardous and non-hazardous materials removed from the site:
  - Friable Asbestos Containing Material: 2,510 Cubic Yards (98% Complete)
  - Galbestos Siding: 3,846 Tons (95% Complete)
  - Construction and Demolition Debris: 20,816 Tons
  - PCB Transformers: 467 Tons (85 Transformers)
  - Liquid Waste: 2,835,310 Gallons
  - Non-Hazardous Solids: 879 Cubic Yards
- Demolition Progress
  - 96% of Basins, Trenches, Sumps and Pits have been cleaned out and backfilled.
  - 90% of Structures Are Gone. Remaining portion of Mill Building is expected to be demolished by the end of July.
  - Meetings are being held to determine how to safely remove the remaining two stoves on the site.
- EPA is still estimating that the remedial investigation will start at the south end of the site sometime between July and September, 2021 and will take 3-4 years to complete.
- The Community Advisory Group (CAG) continued to meet monthly April through July. A CAG meeting was held in July with representatives of MSC. They provided the CAG with a summary of the steps taken to purchase the site as well as an update on the demolition progress at the site. The MSC representatives also indicated the most likely site redevelopment will involve one of the following projects; vehicle mixing center, logistics park, fulfillment center, or a manufacturing plant.
- MSC has created a website ([www.formermclouth.com](http://www.formermclouth.com)) where the public can view a variety of information about the site.

# GINLC Awards Two Seniors in 2020

Every year the GINLC awards a scholarship in honor of Dr. Bruce Jones to the Grosse Ile High School senior who has exhibited academic excellence and passion for protecting our natural resources. This year the Conservancy has selected two seniors for recognition, Sullivan Cowan and Emma Kronell. In addition to participating in the Zoom Senior Award program, GINLC board members from the Education Committee drove to their homes and socially-distanced awarded them with certificates, checks, and lawn signs acknowledging their accomplishments.

Sullivan is an Eagle Scout who plans to attend the University of Michigan to study biology and eventually go to medical school. He is also taking EMT training this summer. Emma was the president of the Grosse Ile High School Environmental Awareness Club and one of two GIHS-EAC members who served as school liaisons with the GI Open Space Committee. Emma will attend Wayne State University in the fall and plans to become an electrical engineer working on energy conservation. Below are selections from their inspiring essays.

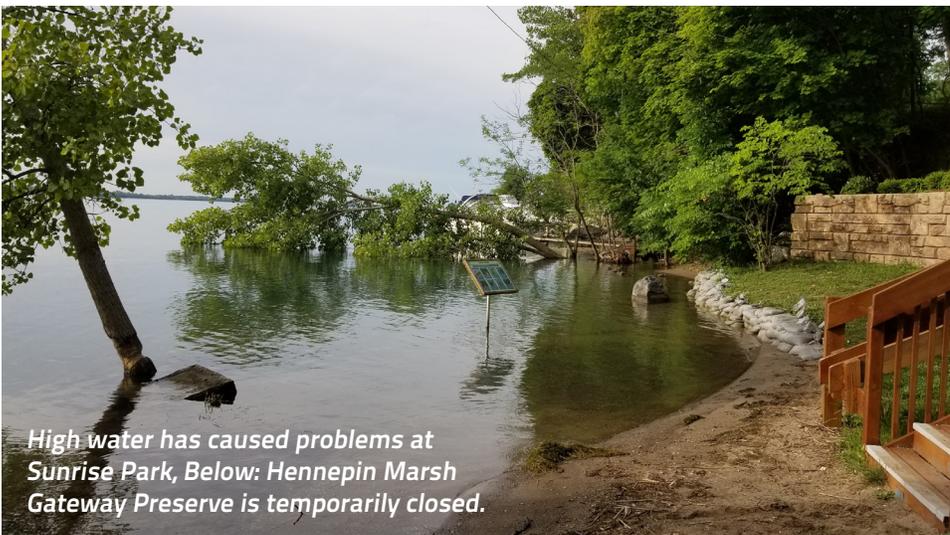


**Sullivan** recounts assisting another Eagle Scout candidate whose project was to enhance a trail on a GINLC property on E. River Road: *"... I realized that I had been missing out on an amazing place. While the path wasn't in the best condition, walking through it still felt magical. I was surrounded by the sight of the tall, green trees, the sounds of birds chirping and insects buzzing, the smells of the pine, and the feeling of the cool breeze on my face. I spent the next three hours shoveling, spreading, and leveling wood chips in grueling heat, yet I enjoyed it thanks to the captivating scenery and I felt honored to know I was making it better."*



**Emma** noted: *"I have used my platform as the president of this club in many ways in my school to serve the environment. For instance, my club and I have worked hard this year staying every Thursday after school to take out all of the school's recycling; if it wasn't for us, the paper and plastic would be thrown away instead of recycled. The first event my club and I organized was to hold an educational assembly to talk about the environment and the science behind climate change. I worked towards this assembly with my school board and the [GINLC] and we planned on featuring the Detroit Channel 4 meteorologist. The second event my club and I organized was to get the school together on Earth Day and garden the land between the high school parking lot and the football field that we call the Nature Study Reserve. This project would cultivate the land from a weeded brushy area to a gardened beautiful place that we think would make a great impact to the school and community. Unfortunately because of the school closures, we were not able to complete these projects. Through these voluntary contributions I think I impacted my community in a positive green way. I am very passionate about the environment and especially the environment of my own community."*

**Congratulations, Sullivan and Emma! Best wishes for the future!**



High water has caused problems at Sunrise Park, Below: Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve is temporarily closed.

# Stewardship

BY PETER KANTZ

Despite the constraints posed by the pandemic (social distancing, wearing masks, and keeping our equipment virus-free), the stewardship crew has been working on a weekly basis to maintain GINLC properties and the properties we steward for the Township and the USFWS. We have kept the crew size small and the large stewardship events that we have held in the past on Saturdays will not be conducted until the pandemic is under control. Aside from cutting the grass and pulling weeds, some larger scale projects were conducted on an emergency basis. The observation platform at the Airport Wildlife Refuge floated off its foundation due to the high water levels. Using a kayak and rope, Chris Zawistowicz and I and two youths retrieved it from the lagoon and dismantled it. We will rebuild it on higher ground, overlooking the lagoon.



High water also created issues at Sunrise Park that required our immediate attention. John Morrison, Chris Zawistowicz, John Leon, and I placed sandbags along the shoreline to prevent further erosion and protect the trees and retaining walls. We removed the brick patio at the park because high water had undermined the structure. Working with the Township, we are developing plans to make improvements to the upper levels of the park so the park can be better enjoyed during periods of high water and to make the park accessible for all. We also received word that a tree on the south end of Sunrise Park toppled due to the high water. We notified the Township and it was removed.

In the interests of safety, we have temporarily closed the Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve to the public. The preserve is a vernal wetlands but high water has turned it into a part of the marsh, putting the trail and boardwalk underwater and making the observation platform inaccessible. The preserve will be re-opened once the water level drops and we are able to repair the damage to the trail and boardwalk.

We hope by this time next year that the pandemic will be over, the water levels will be down, and we'll be able to get back to a more normal stewardship routine. I miss the large stewardship events and meeting new stewardship volunteers.

## REMINDER, Balloons are Deadly for Wildlife!

COVID-19 has made it tougher to celebrate life's big moments such as graduations. GINLC is happy to see that these big events are mostly being celebrated with lawn signs and not with balloon releases. Even stationary outdoor balloon decorations can become a hazard to wildlife if they escape from their moorings, as they often do. Technically, balloons are biodegradable, made from natural rubber latex. But studies show that it can take years for balloons to biodegrade, and during that time, they can be consumed by wildlife, or wildlife can become tangled in ribbons or strings attached to the balloons. Balloon fragments are among the items found in the stomachs of dead turtles, fish, birds and other wildlife and can be more deadly than hard plastics.

If you find balloon debris in the great outdoors, contribute that info to [balloondebris.org](http://balloondebris.org), which includes U-M School for Environment and Sustainability grad student Lara O'Brien's web survey form. You can be a volunteer citizen-scientist and report balloon debris findings along the Great Lakes: when, where and what kind of debris.

Even the trade group, The Balloon Council, opposes balloon releases, urging the public to use balloons responsibly by weighing them down, and popping and disposing of them properly after the celebration.

# GINLC 2019/20 High School Photo Contest Winners!

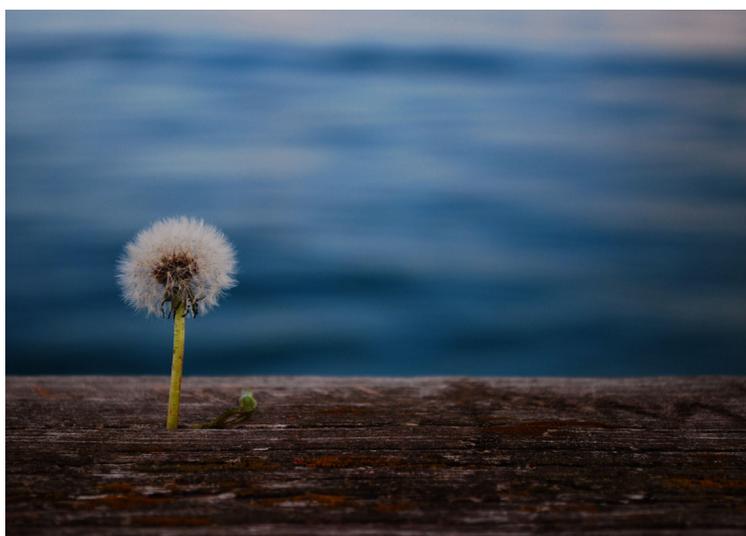


← **GRAND PRIZE** //

*Early Spring Evening*

Brendan Stephens,  
Allen Park H.S.

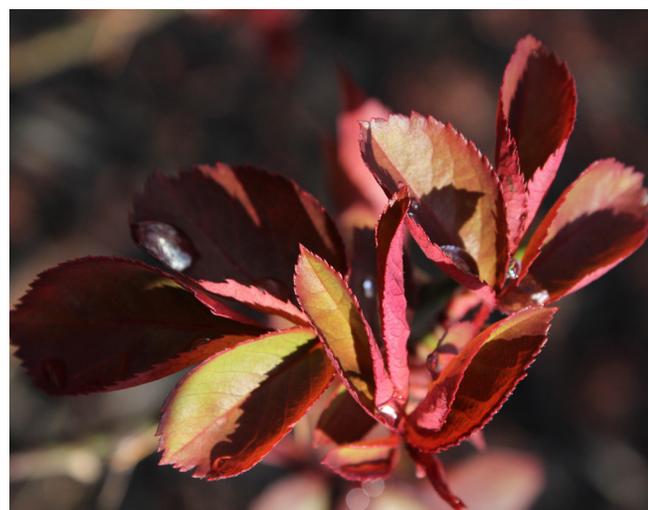
**COLOR TOUR** ↓



ABOVE RIGHT:  
1ST PLACE //  
***God's Gift***  
Madison Lee,  
Grosse Ile H.S.

BELOW LEFT:  
2ND PLACE //  
***On a Giant's  
Shoulder***  
Olivia Papalia,  
Trenton H.S.

BELOW RIGHT:  
3RD PLACE //  
***Unfolding***  
Cordelia  
Krajewski,  
Roosevelt H.S.



## NATURE'S MAGIC



ABOVE:  
1ST PLACE //  
***An Allium Sunset***  
Jessie Smith,  
Trenton H.S.

CENTER:  
2ND PLACE //  
***Morning Snow Sticks to Spider Web***  
Devin Stephens,  
Allen Park H.S.



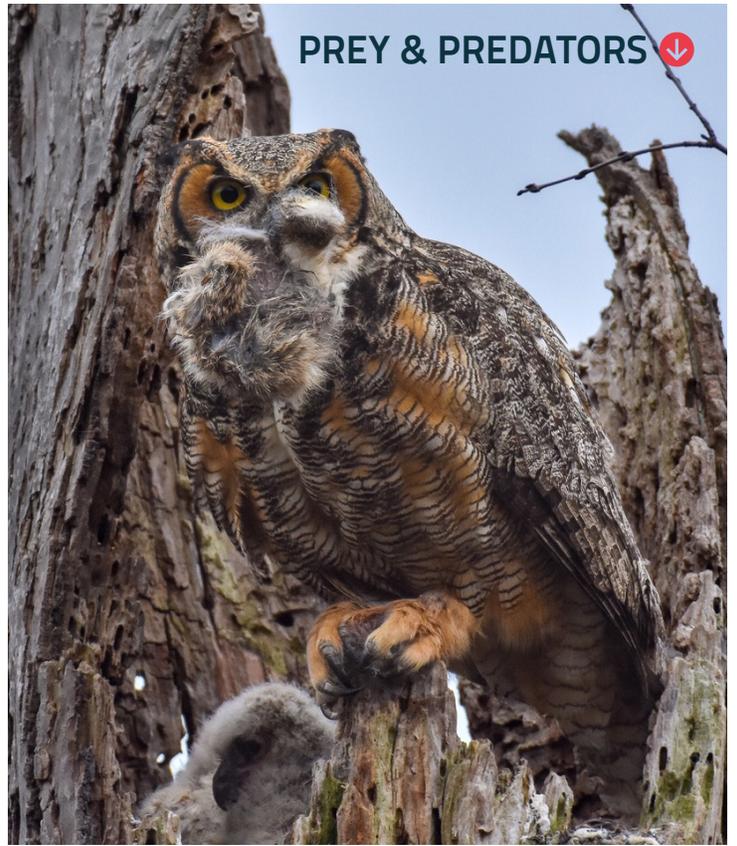
BELOW:  
3RD PLACE //  
***Tell Me Your Story***  
Kaydin Fowler,  
Carlson H.S.



ABOVE RIGHT:  
1ST PLACE //  
***Dinner Time***  
John Fortener,  
Allen Park H.S.

CENTER RIGHT:  
2ND PLACE //  
***The Morning Hunter***  
Jess Roekle,  
Grosse Ile H.S.

BELOW RIGHT:  
3RD PLACE //  
***A Nutty Path***  
Joscelyn Stein,  
Riverview H.S.



## PREY & PREDATORS



PHOTO CONTEST, continued

The GINLC 'Take It Outside' Photo Contest is one of the Conservancy's most popular activities. The contest ended in May. Students from 10 area high schools participated and submitted a total of 116 photos. The winners were given cash prizes. In addition to these ten winners, 16 honorable mentions were awarded. All 26 photos will be displayed at the Trenton and Wyandotte libraries this fall, if the libraries are open to the public.

Thank you to our judge, **Chris Zawistowicz**, for his time and expertise in reviewing the photos and making the tough decisions. Chris is



a chemical engineer originally from the UK. Upon retirement he started a second career as a travel and features writer and has had articles and photos published in

local newspapers, international travel websites and specialist magazines in the US and overseas.

Thanks also to the teachers who publicize the contest and encourage their students to participate.

**Lori Riopelle**, a member of the GINLC Education Committee, deserves appreciation and praise for her dedication in running the entire contest. She develops the annual contest poster, handles all the communication with the



teachers, receives and organizes the emailed photos, coordinates with the judge, contacts the students, posts the winning photos on social media, delivers the certificates, prizes, and printed photos to the winning students,

and arranges the photo displays at the libraries and other locations. These tasks were complicated this year by the pandemic, but she still pulled it off without a hitch. Lori is a long-time member of the GINLC and a dedicated volunteer even beyond the photo contest. Thank you, Lori!



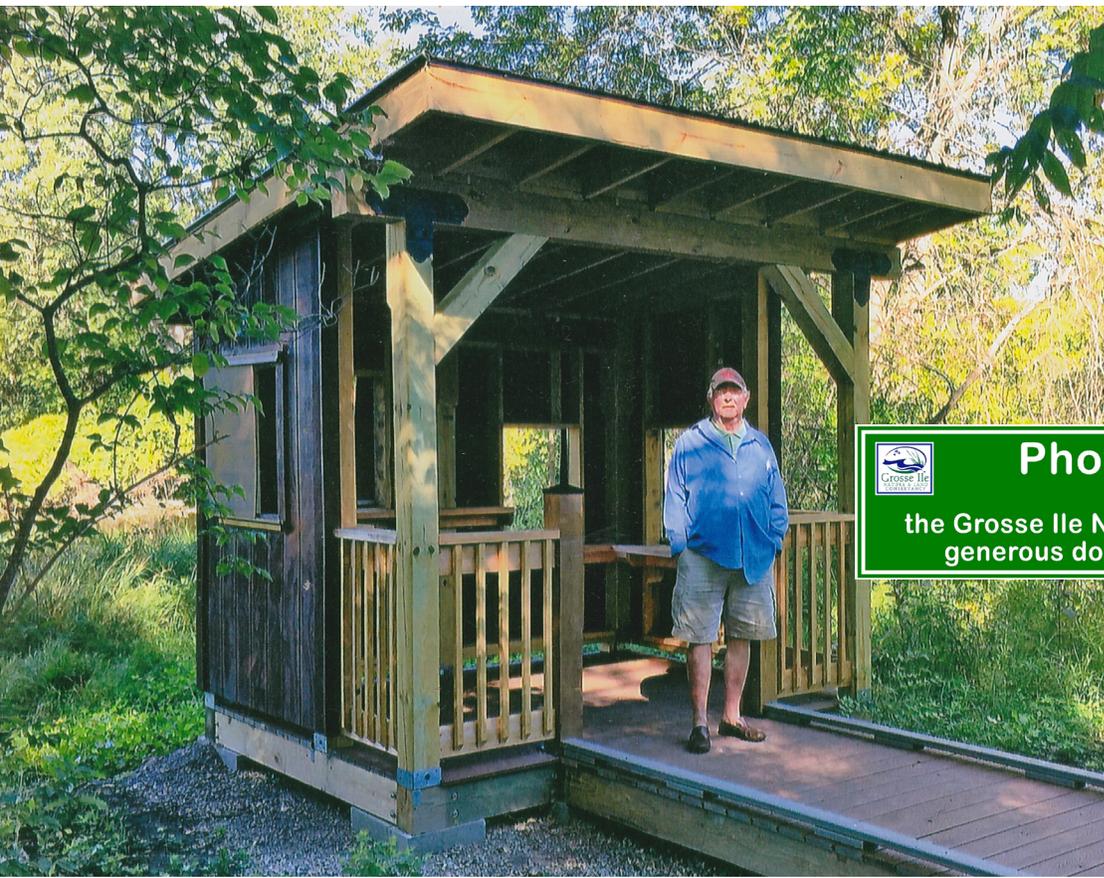
## Our Downy Hawthorn Gets a New Plaque

*Grosse Ile can boast of many residents who are champions in athletics, the arts, and academic and professional success. We also have living in our midst a National and Michigan Big Tree Champion – a Downy Hawthorn tree growing just east of the Baird & Lowler Building Co. at 8142 Macomb. For many years the tree sported a small metal plaque naming it as the largest Downy Hawthorn in both Michigan and the USA.*

*Sharp eyes revealed two things – Pam Frucci's sharp eyes noted that the metal plaque had disappeared at some point and needed replacement. And someone else's sharp eyes observed an impressive Downy Hawthorn tree at a church in Ann Arbor. That discovery resulted in the two trees being declared co-champions, and that information was included on our replacement plaque.*

*On July 1, GINLC board members Pam Frucci and John Leon mounted the larger replacement plaque on the tree where pedestrians and cyclists can stop and acknowledge our oldest champ.*

← Lower Left: Our Lori prefers to remain a "behind-the-scenes gal" but she is our Wonder Woman! Since WW photos are copyrighted, here's a picture of Bert and John's granddaughter Julia in preschool in 2011.



 **Photography Blind**   
 built by  
 the Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy with a  
 generous donation from the Jackson Family



# A Salute to John C. Jackson

John C. Jackson is one of the GINLC’s most magnanimous donors. As a long-time member and the 2019 Conservationist of the Year Award recipient, we decided that we needed to take some space in our newsletter, and some time of our readers, to introduce this generous man in our midst.

John has lived on Grosse Ile for 44 years, and built his home here. After a successful career at Ford, he continued his investments in the stock market, which he says “worked out well.” John then decided to “invest” in his community and the environment, and he selected the organization in his own backyard, the Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy.

*“The GINLC is extremely grateful to John Jackson for his support of our efforts, and we are sure that all Grosse Ile residents are grateful as well.”*

John likes to see tangible results from all of his investments, in the stock market and with the Conservancy. He has funded significant projects on Grosse Ile. These projects include a bench and the photo blind on the quarry pond at the Gibraltar Bay Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge on E. River Road, and the two retaining walls at Sunrise Park. The improvements at Sunrise Park have definitely increased the quality of life for Grosse

Ile residents by providing waterfront access, which is rare on the island. He also funded the GINLC hands-on science education projects at Grosse Ile High School and in the classroom of Gibraltar’s Shumate Middle School teacher, Jeff Bouwman, a Grosse Ile resident.

John also has a second career as a gentleman farmer due to his investments in agricultural real estate in Michigan and Ohio. These pursuits keep him interested in weather issues and how they are manifesting in the Midwest with high water levels and changing rain patterns.

The GINLC is extremely grateful to John Jackson for his support of our efforts, and we are sure that all Grosse Ile residents are grateful as well.

**Upper Left: John C. Jackson stands in front of the photo blind at the GBU. The plaque was added to the top of the photo blind after this photo was taken. The bench is located nearby. Above: The plaque on this boulder at Sunrise Park reads, “The Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy and the Grosse Ile Township recognize John C. Jackson for his unparalleled generosity that has resulted in the enhancement of Sunrise Park and the quality of life on Grosse Ile.”**

## GINLC Positions Grosse Ile as a Leader in Water Pollution Prevention

*Did you happen to read a Page One story in the Detroit Free Press on Friday July 10 called "Great Lakes contaminant source: Your Driveway"? Well, we on Grosse Ile can proudly say, "Not our driveways!" That's because in 2017, at the urging of the GINLC, Grosse Ile Township banned the use of coal tar pavement sealants.*

*Until the ban, coal-tar sealants were the common method for sealing driveways and parking lots and they were applied widely in Grosse Ile. Those materials contain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs. As described by scientists and reported in the Free Press, PAHs are "one of the most widespread and potentially toxic contaminants in Great Lakes tributaries." It continues and states that these chemicals "pose a greater risk to aquatic creatures than even herbicide and insecticide pollution."*

*The Township ordinance officer sent notices to local companies about the ban and we believe they are in compliance by using alternative materials. There are also latex based products for the Do-It-Yourselfers that can be bought at all the big box stores.*

***Grosse Ile – let's continue to reduce our impact on the environment! How else can GI be a leader?***

## "We Was Robbed!"

BY BERT URBANI AND PETER KANTZ

"We was robbed" is the eternal (and grammatically incorrect) lament of the sports fan whose team seems to repeatedly snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. In the case of the Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy and the US Fish & Wildlife Service, that lament was no exaggeration. We were robbed!

What happened? In mid-May Conservancy board members Peter Kantz and John Leon noticed damage to the airport property gate lock and the lock on the Conservancy shed. They talked with the police and replaced the damaged lock. Nothing was missing. An airport surveillance video camera recorded a couple of teens joy-riding on the Conservancy's riding lawnmower on airport property.

Then about a week later, trespassers again entered the airport property, further damaging the gate and lock. They broke into the Conservancy shed, stealing hundreds of dollars of equipment belonging to the Conservancy and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. They even tossed the GINLC trail camera that was mounted to protect the shed into the water! Peter and John laboriously moved the remaining equipment to the township DPS building while they installed a heavy duty lock on the shed, and then moved the equipment back.

A photo from the airport surveillance video was then posted on the Grosse Ile Police Department Facebook page with a request to the public to help identify the youth. Due to the efforts of Detective Peter Darzniek, the thieves, ranging in age from 15 to 18 years old, were caught, the stolen equipment was returned, and the damaged equipment was replaced by the perpetrators. Consultations were held with the Police Chief, Prosecutor and parents. No felony charges were filed, however, full restitution and community service were required. It takes a village. Hopefully those involved learned a valuable lesson.



***Joy-riders on the GINLC lawnmower on airport property.***

GIPD

### 2 Easy Ways to Give



#### KROGER CARDS

Enroll your Kroger Plus card to benefit the Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy!

Go to [www.kroger.com/communityrewards](http://www.kroger.com/communityrewards) to enroll.

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.

*EASTERN FOX SNAKE, continued from cover*

fields, pastures, woodlots, rocky areas, and woodland. These conditions make our area an ideal place to live. Fox snakes are very good swimmers and can swim long distances from island to island.

**DIET:** Adult snakes will take frogs, rodents, birds, small rabbits and other reptiles, and young snakes can rid your yard of pests like slugs and insects. The Fox snake is a constrictor and will squeeze its prey until it is subdued. Once the prey is under control or stops breathing, the snake will swallow the meal whole. Their flexible jaws help with this process.

**LIFESTYLE:** Fox snakes are active from late April until late October. Breeding occurs in June to early July. Female Fox snakes will nest and lay a clutch of 8 to 25 leathery eggs in leaves and wood debris, rotted foliage and logs, or beneath stumps. The eggs are about 1.5 to 2 inches long and take about 60 days to hatch. Once the young hatch, they are quite independent and set off on their own. While it is uncertain as to the lifespan of the Fox snake in the wild, they can live about 17 years in captivity.

Snakes are cold blooded reptiles; you may see them sunning themselves to raise their body temperature. They are typically active during the day in the spring and fall but prefer to relax in cooler spots during hot summer days. During these times they will hunt at night. Late in the fall, the Fox snake will find a frost-free shelter like an old rodent burrow to pass the time in a dormant state. Accessible sheds or houses with entry points may attract snakes seeking shelter.

**BEHAVIOR:** The Fox snake is harmless to humans. Most snakes are docile but they may strike out if they feel threatened. Many people confuse the Fox snake with a rattlesnake. One of the Fox snake's defense mechanisms is to shake its tail as a warning to predators. This is a bluff, as the shaking creates a vibration of leaves between the ground and snake, giving off a rattle sound without a rattle. The Fox snake may also secrete a musky smelling substance to encourage being left alone. This odor is said to smell like Fox urine and that is how they earned their name.

**STATUS:** Loss of natural habitat, illegal collection as pets and the killing of Fox snakes due to misidentification and Ophidiophobia (fear of snakes) have put the Eastern Fox snake on the Threatened Species List in Michigan. If you see one, it is a rare sight and a rare treat. Remember, Eastern Fox snakes are protected, so please do not hurt them. In fact, do not hurt any snakes! Be a citizen

scientist and report any snake sightings at [miherpatlas.org](http://miherpatlas.org) and share your photos with us on our Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy Facebook page.

**VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES:** Grosse Ile offers many opportunities to see snakes, including, possibly, in your own yard. If you have one in your yard and do not feel comfortable sharing your space, try to get over it. Look around to see if you can discover why it is attracted to your yard. Are there places for it to curl up and relax when it's hot, like a shed or wood and brush pile? Do you have creatures



*“Many people confuse the Fox snake with a rattlesnake. One of the Fox snake’s defense mechanisms is to shake its tail as a warning to predators. This is a bluff...”*

like small rabbits, chipmunks, mice, etc. enjoying your yard? If so, your guest will help keep them in check. If it absolutely makes your skin crawl and you are unable to sleep, see if you can discover what makes it comfortable there and change the surroundings. Recruit a friend or neighbor to encourage your snake to leave by using a soft broom and direct it away from your home. It will eventually get the message.

Recently we have noticed a renewed interest and speculation in identifying our snakes. While many of our resident snakes appear to look alike, there are clues to help us identify them. You can learn how to identify snakes with the Michigan DNR's 60-Second Snakes ID YouTube videos, as well as how to gently remove one from a building. Knowing our snakes will help protect them, and us!

# Don't miss out on the 2020 Tax Deduction — DONATE!

BY JOHN LEON

The inclusion of an expanded charitable giving incentive is a critical acknowledgement by Congress that the work of nonprofits, like the Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy, provide essential environmental services for the good of the community.

The tax reform bill that passed in 2017 essentially doubled the standard deduction for individual and joint tax filers. One of the consequences of that change was that the percentage of taxpayers who itemize their deductions went from around 35% to 6%. Though the vast majority of people saw their tax burden go down, it also meant that over 95% of taxpayers could no longer write off their gifts to charity.



For the over 9 out of 10 people who no longer itemize their charitable giving, the 2020 coronavirus relief bill, the CARES Act, will allow individual taxpayers to deduct donations to charity of up to \$600 for Married-filing-jointly taxpayers (\$300 for Single taxpayers) on their 2020 federal tax return only (the one that you'll file in 2021), even if they take the standard deduction.

It is calculated by subtracting the amount of the cash donation from your gross income. It is an "above the line" adjustment to income that will reduce your AGI, and thereby reduce taxable income. And, if you have already made your donation since Jan. 1, that contribution counts toward the \$300/\$600 cap. Visit <https://wish.org/stimulus>

**Now you can give and save at the same time!**

TO RECEIVE EVENT NOTICES & NEWSLETTERS BY EMAIL, CONTACT US AT [INFO@GINLC.ORG](mailto:INFO@GINLC.ORG)



## SUMMER 2020

To make a  
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