



the VOYAGEUR

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GROSSE ILE NATURE & LAND CONSERVANCY

FALL 2014

"I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order" *John Burroughs*

FALL EVENTS



ANNUAL MEETING

November 8th
10 am at
Grosse Ile Golf &
Country Club
(change in venue)



KIDS' DISCOVERY

OWL PROWL
Saturday, Nov. 15th
6:30 pm at
Centennial Farm

"A BIG DAY"
BIRD WALK
Saturday Dec. 13th
7:30 am at
Centennial Farm
and
8:30 am at
Westcroft Gardens

Registration Required
Call Natalie Cypher
734-624-7993

We All Live Downstream

BY BERT URBANI

There's a saying that "we all live downstream," which reflects the fact that, wherever we live, we are dependent for our water quality on our neighbors upstream. And the reality is that "we also all live upstream" because our actions affect the water quality that our downstream neighbors receive. Living on Grosse Ile, these facts are (or should be) more obvious to us than to many of our friends and family who live on the mainland, far from any of the rivers, lakes or streams that collectively form the Great Lakes Watershed.

So what major water quality event happened to our downstream neighbors this summer? As we all know, toxic algae in Lake Erie got so bad that people in the Monroe and Toledo areas could not drink the water, bathe, wash or cook with it for several days.

HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

Most experts agree that the main problem is the phosphorus flooding the lake from fertilized farms, feedlots and leaky septic systems, mostly from the Maumee and Sandusky Rivers in Ohio. Significant amounts of phosphorous come from all sources upstream that drain into the Detroit River, including communities such as Grosse Ile. Other factors include the impact of non-native invasive species such as zebra mussels, an increase in water temperature in the lake, a change in the form of phosphorous entering the lake to one that is more conducive to algal growth, and a reduction of the extent and duration of winter ice cover over the past 50 years (except for last winter!).

The result has been a decline in the health of Lake Erie (after its successful recovery



Continued on page 5



We Are SEMIWILD!

Last year the Land Conservancies of SE MI Collaboration re-organized as "SEMIWILD" to leverage our collective ability to protect land and to increase public awareness about land conservation. Social media includes a website, Facebook page and Twitter feed. If you have a business or organization that would like to be a SEMIWILD Outpost, please review the information provided at www.semiwild.org

Our mission is to protect and preserve our treasured open spaces, green corridors, and natural areas found throughout Southeast Michigan. From farm lands, creeks and rivers, to open fields, parks and recreation lands, each of these wild places is critical to our everyday quality of life. Join us to help protect our true nature, now and forever.

Reflections From the President, *Liz Hugel*

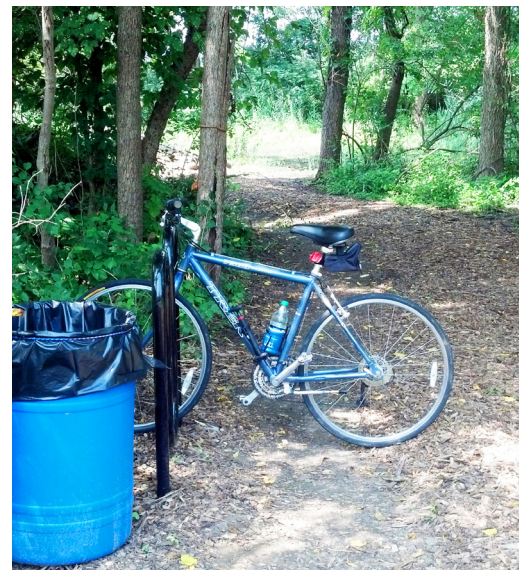
Another year is moving to completion and our final programs for the year are now in place. We hope to see you at one of the upcoming educational events or our annual meeting on November 8th. After last year's presentation by Marc Lafayette on the history of land preservation on Grosse Ile, we are very much looking forward to hearing this year's presentation on Hennepin Point: Past, Present and Future by Michael Gerdenich of BASF. Mike is a senior remediation specialist at BASF Corporation and he has more in-depth knowledge about Hennepin Point than anyone.

Our volunteers have been working to prepare our land preserves for winter and it's also time to start thinking and planning for next year. Membership renewal letters have been mailed and we hope you will continue to support our grass-roots activities and educational programs with a donation, at whatever level you can. Like many generations did before me, I look towards the future and have concerns with the willingness of our younger generations to embrace the responsibility of stewardship for our protected areas. With constant stimulation from phones, gadgets and social media as a whole, sometimes a walk in the woods or time spent observing wildlife is just what's needed to pause and regain perspectives on what's important in life. Whether it's financially supporting GINLC, actively volunteering, raising awareness among your friends, neighbors, and families, or all of the above, please help to protect our natural heritage.

AMAZON SMILE & KROGER CARDS RAISE CENTS & MAKE SENSE!

Using your buying power to help GINLC; every little bit helps! That's the theory behind simple acts that you can do to help the GINLC raise much needed funds. If you are an Amazon shopper you can sign up for **Amazon Smile** and pick the GINLC as your beneficiary. Then GINLC will receive 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases (<http://smile.amazon.com/about>).

You can also connect your **Kroger Plus** card to the GINLC (<https://www.kroger.com/communityrewards>) to direct a portion of your Kroger expenditures to the Conservancy. These donations are small but they do add up, and they are painless! (Remember, these actions don't take the place of your much-appreciated membership dues & donations!)



Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve

BY PETER KANTZ

After three years in the planning, designing and permitting stages, construction on the Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve commenced in June of this year. The preserve consists of a 70 foot boardwalk spanning a wetland area, an eight foot by twelve foot observation platform overlooking Hennepin Marsh and five foot wide woodchip trails connecting the preserve's entrance to the boardwalk and the boardwalk to the observation platform. A bike rack, waste receptacle and signage were also included in the project.

The preserve is built on one and one half acres of land donated to GINLC by BASF and is located on Meridian Road a half mile north of Bridge Road in Grosse Ile Township. The preserve is open to the public from dawn to dusk for the purpose of viewing the wetland and marsh. Use restrictions are posted at the east end of the boardwalk. No parking is permitted on Meridian but parking is allowed on the side streets, a few hundred feet north and south of the preserve.

Design work for the project was done by volunteers with help from a professional civil engineer and designer whose services were donated by BASF. Construction was done by local companies. Funding for the project came from donations. Volunteers built the trails, reconstructed the wetlands and cleaned up the site following construction.

Hennepin Marsh Gateway Preserve provides the public with an opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty of the wetland and marsh with their lush vegetation and their abundant wildlife ranging from frogs to herons. It is a place of peaceful solitude that only nature can provide.

The Hennepin Marsh Gateway has received all final approvals from the Township and can now be opened to the public.





Insect Discovery

BY BERT URBANI & NATALIE RAY

On September 7 the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy hosted a family-friendly educational program, "Insect Discovery." Famed naturalist Natalie Ray led the group of 20+ people around the Gibraltar Bay Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge where they encountered a fascinating array of 5, 6, 7 and 8-legged creatures. The odd-numbered legs were the result of losses that didn't seem to slow anybody down, especially the Daddy Longlegs. Natalie taught the group that Daddy Longlegs are not really spiders, although they share some characteristics with spiders. They are arachnids, like spiders, and have 8 legs, but they have only one body part, with the head, thorax and abdomen fused into one. Spiders have two body parts, a fused head and thorax, and an abdomen with a distinct waist. Daddy Longlegs also have only two eyes, whereas spiders can have as many as eight or 12.

During the walk through the Refuge, many moths, butterflies, grasshoppers, crickets, dragonflies, damselflies and garden spiders were spotted. The group used butterfly nets to capture some of the insects and viewed them through magnifying glasses before releasing them. Natalie also demonstrated a technique of placing a white sheet under a tree and shaking the branches to see what falls down.

A highlight of the event was the presence of a Monarch butterfly that had emerged from its chrysalis only an hour

before the program started. By the end of the program the Monarch was ready to be released, and several children were lucky enough to hold it on their hands before it flew away. While the attendees at the event were all locals from the Downriver area, the Monarch was facing a long journey, migrating from Grosse Ile all the way to Mexico. Good luck, Monarch!



TOP: A newly emerged Monarch butterfly just before its first flight.

CENTER: Natalie and the group look for insects and spiders in a patch of Goldenrod.

BOTTOM: Black & yellow Argiope Spider seen on our walk — a common garden & field resident.



MONARCH MIGRATION ON RADAR!

BY BERT URBANI

Many thanks to Grosse Ile new resident and GINLC member Alison Drzinski who sent this internet link to a fascinating story from St. Louis, where meteorologists were initially stumped by an odd-looking shape on their weather radar screens. Turns out it was a vast swarm of migrating monarchs on their way to their winter home in Mexico. Visit this webpage for the full story: <http://www.citylab.com/weather/2014/09/a-strange-cloud-over-st-louis-turns-out-to-be-an-enormous-swarm-of-butterflies/380614/>



Delray Students Visit

BY KAREN SKROCKI

On Aug 19th, Art Payette and Karen Skrocki from the GINLC welcomed 40 students from the Delray Community School in Detroit to the Gibraltar Bay Unit. They were given nature tours and saw displays on geology and marsh wildlife. Our thanks go to naturalist Natalie Ray, geologist Joel Moe, Kevin Anderson of Huron-Clinton MetroParks and USFWS volunteer Jake Bonello. Others who helped that morning were Al Skrocki, Barbara Moe, and Dennis O'Brien. Peter Rock helped as liaison to the school faculty to arrange this event.

Downstream, continued from cover

from its declared “death” in the 1960s and 70s). Toxic algal blooms have returned, composed primarily of the cyanobacteria *Microcystis aeruginosa*. Commonly referred to as “blue green algae,” it can produce high concentrations of the toxin microcystin which can impact human health.

Drinking water with this toxin can cause fever, abdominal pain, headaches, nausea and vomiting, while exposure from swimming can result in itchy and irritated eyes and skin and other allergy-like symptoms.

Along with the health risks are other problems including beach contamination and closures, reductions in tourism, lowering of property values, declines in fish and wildlife populations and degraded habitats, and added costs to municipalities, industry and people for the provision of safe drinking water.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Delaware scientist Bern Sweeney wrote this in a Stroud Water Research Center newsletter but it applies equally well to all of us:

We alone can control our actions — and those actions affect our downstream neighbors. Were we each to consider the Golden Rule when it comes to water, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” we could do a lot to

protect our drinking water supplies.

How you might ask? Ensure that your septic system is working properly. Conserve water in your home and garden; act as if we’re experiencing a drought everyday. Think about what you pour down the drain, apply to your lawn and your hardtop driveway; if you wouldn’t want to drink it, would your neighbor downstream? Plant a tree. In fact, plant lots of them — because research shows that they not only reduce flooding, but they also help prevent pollutants from entering our water supplies. Understand what it costs to chemically treat and filter your water for

human consumption — and that the more we foul it, the costlier that bill becomes. Promote the ordinances and other legislation that enforce best management practices in your communities. Be part of the solution — and tell your family, your friends and neighbors to do the same. Finally, be thankful to the too few individuals and agencies that actually do monitor our streams and rivers — the source of your drinking water and the lifeblood of our communities.

Take Bern Sweeney’s words to heart and join the Healthy Lawns and Gardens Committee!

“The reality is that “we also all live upstream” because our actions affect the water quality that our downstream neighbors receive.”

JOIN THE HEALTHY LAWNS AND GARDENS COMMITTEE!

At its September 17 meeting, the GINLC Board voted to create a Healthy Lawns and Gardens Committee. This committee will meet this winter to learn about the best practices and products to achieve an attractive lawn and bountiful flower and vegetable gardens while protecting human health and the environment. They will share that information with residents next spring. For more information or to sign up for the committee, contact Bert Urbani at bertdetroitriver@gmail.com.

USING YOUR KROGER PLUS CARD CAN HELP THE GROSSE ILE NATURE & LAND CONSERVANCY

If you have a Kroger Plus Card, please sign up for the community rewards program. IT COSTS YOU NOTHING. Even if you have designated a community charity in the past, you need to renew or designate a new charity each April/May. Our GINLC number is 79264.

Simply register online at krogercommunityrewards.com

- Be sure to have your Kroger Plus card handy and register your card with your organization after you sign up.
- If you do not yet have a Kroger Plus card, please know that they are available at the customer service desk at any Kroger.
- Click on Sign In/Register
- Most participants are new online customers, so they must click on SIGN UP TODAY in the 'New Customer?' box.
- Sign up for a Kroger Rewards Account by entering zip code, clicking on favorite store, entering your email address and creating a password, agreeing to the terms and conditions
- You will then get a message to check your email inbox and click on the link within the body of the email.
- Click on My Account and use your email address and password to proceed to the next step.
- Click on Edit Kroger Community Rewards information and input your Kroger Plus card number.
- Update or confirm your information.
- Enter Non Profit Organization (NPO) number (79264) or name of organization (Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy) or select organization from list and click on confirm.
- To verify you are enrolled correctly, you will see our name on the right side of your information page.
- If you use your phone number at the register? Call 877-576-7587 to get your Kroger Plus card number.
- You must swipe your registered Kroger Plus card or use the phone number that is related to the registered Kroger Plus card when shopping for each purchase to count.



Auld Lang Syne

BY BERT URBANI

Should old acquaintance be forgot, and never brought to mind? Absolutely not, in song or in real life. Old acquaintances abounded at the recent Grosse Ile High School 50th reunion, including some fans of the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy. Former foreign exchange student Marianne Girsberger-Stieger from Baden, Switzerland, her "Grosse Ile sister" Mandy Phillips, and Cynthia Sampson from Asheville, NC, added to the festivities of their class reunion by stopping by the Gibraltar Bay Unit (GBU) of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge for a short tour with GINLC president Liz Hugel and board member Bert Urbani. Mandy was one of the founders of the GINLC and still lives on Grosse Ile, and both she and Marianne continue to be GINLC supports. All three women were happy to see the progress that Grosse Ile has achieved in conserving valuable wildlife habitat and Open Space. Like John Burroughs, they found themselves "healed and restored" with their senses "put in order" by spending time at the Refuge. Everyone is invited to experience similar restoration during Open House Sundays at the GBU from 1 to 4 pm until the end of October.

50th
Happy Anniversary!

**The Wilderness Act just turned 50.
Did you know it took 8 years and over 60 drafts?**

"A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

Donations Received October 2013 - September 2014

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Thank you!

GINLC Annual Meeting

November 8th

**SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 8**
10 am to noon
**Grosse Ile Golf &
Country Club**

PRESENTATION
by Michael Gerdenich,
Senior Remediation
Specialist,
BASF Corporation

The Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy will be holding their annual meeting on Saturday, November 8th from 10–12 noon at the Grosse Ile Golf and Country Club. Conservancy members will be reviewing progress on a wide variety of projects that were undertaken during the year and their plans for next year. Michael Gerdenich, Senior Remediation Specialist

from BASF Corporation will be the guest speaker. The title of his talk will be “**Hennepin Point: Past, Present, Future.**” All residents of Grosse Ile are cordially invited. A complimentary continental breakfast will be available. This is your chance to learn about the various projects and 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 INFO@GINLC.ORG



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donation call**
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734.671.0125
**To sign up for a
work party call**
PETER KANTZ
734.558.2149
or ART PAYETTE
734.671.0540

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*To Promote for the public benefit the preservation,
stewardship and understanding of the natural resources in
the Township of Grosse Ile and surrounding area*

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