
WATER'S EDGE

Gratiot Lake Conservancy News

Volume 4

Fall/Winter 2002

New Scholarship Fund Announced

A generous donation to the Conservancy was made by Rita Sandretto of Chassell in memory of her late husband, Jack Sandretto. This donation will be used to fund scholarships for students involved in programs at the Gratiot Lake Conservancy. Rita has been a long time supporter of conservation organizations. A retired librarian, she values education and has enjoyed working with children throughout her life.

Next summer, scholarship(s) will be offered to a Copper Country student or students who wish to attend programs at the Conservancy Preserve. Two weeks of study at the Conservancy Preserve are being planned that will be run through Michigan Tech's Summer Youth Program. Two fine teachers, Sandra Harting and Jeff Crumbaugh, are designing the programs which will be offered next summer. If you know of a 12-18 year old who might be interested in attending please contact Bonnie for information.

Photo Courtesy of Jim Hay



What are Kristine Bradof, Anita Campbell, and Virginia Jamison (l. to r.) smiling at? See more Open House photos on page 5.

Photo Courtesy of Jim Hay



Find out what they are looking at on page 7.

The **Gratiot Lake Conservancy** is a Michigan Not-For-Profit Corporation formed in 1998 to preserve and protect Gratiot Lake and land within the Gratiot Lake watershed. Through educational programs and materials, the Conservancy encourages good stewardship of the watershed and an understanding of its history and ecology. We promote research to further understand the Lake and its watershed. The Noblet Field Station located in the SE corner of the Lake is the staging area for many of the Conservancy's educational and research activities.

Sweeting Tips

Jim Sweeting is the wildlife biologist/forester who came to Gratiot in July and August to meet with interested landowners about the conservation values of their land. His work is funded by Keweenaw County through the Houghton/Keweenaw Conservation District. Some highlights from Jim Sweeting's visit to Gratiot Lake this past summer follow.

Virginia Jamison was surprised to learn that there are young elms growing at the lake. American Elms were decimated by Dutch Elm disease spread by an alien beetle in the 1960's and '70's. Now American Elms



Photo Courtesy of Joe Lizzadro

Tony Lizzadro, Bonnie Hay, Joe Nicholas, Jim Sweeting (l. to r.)

seldom grow to an advanced age because of it. Virginia commented, "The last elm to die at my place was the elm that hung over the lake in front. It lasted several years after I had the rest cut down in 1977 or '78. It was probably several hundred years old. The biggest elm was the one up the driveway. Aunt Mary, Danny, Dorothy, David and I circled it with our arms before it was cut. We counted over 400 rings and the middle was hollow. Since Jim came I have noticed a number of young elms coming up. I hope that something can protect them from the disease as they get older."

Sweeting advised that certain native shrubs such as hazelnut or serviceberry (sugar plum) would enhance the wildlife cover and food supply along roads which had trees removed for power line clearance. Serviceberry and beaked hazelnut are native shrubs that can be transplanted into



Photo Courtesy of Bonnie Hay

Jim Sweeting (r.) explains a water control device installed at his restored wetland in Chassell to Gina Nicholas, Nick Wilson, and Virginia Jamison (r. to l.)

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About *Water's Edge*

Water's Edge is the newsletter of the Gratiot Lake Conservancy. Its purpose is to report Conservancy news, to share information about the ecology and history of Gratiot Lake and its watershed, and to suggest ways to improve stewardship of the Lake and its watershed. Please send questions, comments, or offerings for *Water's Edge* to Bonnie Hay, Editor *Water's Edge*, P.O. Box 310, Mohawk, MI 49950
e-mail: belh@bellatlantic.net
phone: (July/August) 337-5476
Visit our new website at <http://www.mlswa.org/gratiot-lake-1508>

New at Noblet's

Mackenzie Kelly, a summer resident in Eagle Harbor for over thirty years and an expert chair caner, has rewoven the seat and back of an Indiana hickory rocker which was part of the original furniture at the Noblet cabin. Thank you to Mack for volunteering his time for this. The chair looks great!

A new storage shed was completed in June which includes an area to stack firewood and a room to house the composting toilet.

The Conservancy's new *Sun-Mar Self Composting Toilet* is a step up from the old privy. It is a self contained water-less alternative to water flush toilets and a septic system. A fan and heating coil accelerate the decomposition process (at Noblet's this is powered by the solar panel). The unit is self contained and requires some maintenance. Wood chips or peat must be added on a regular basis and the drum must be cranked to rotate every few days when in use. When used only a few months out of the year as this is, the compost is removed once a year and is suitable for use on shrubs and flower gardens.

A recycled plastic picnic table was purchased to replace the deteriorating wooden one. This table is made from recycled plastic milk jugs and soda pop bottles, those with the #1 or #2 recycling symbol on them. There are approximately 7 milk jugs or 4 two liter pop bottles to a pound of recycled plastic lumber. Since the plastic resists rot and insect infestation and never needs painting the table will be around for sometime. If we ever decide to dispose of it, it's 100% recyclable.



Rare Sightings



There have been many reports of wolves returning to the Keweenaw, and cougar have been reported in the area. If you spot a cougar, lynx, wolf, winter bald eagle (from January 1-15 only), or moose,



the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) would like to know. These animals are all scarce in Michigan, and the state is tracking their numbers and distribution. The MDNR website contains convenient forms for reporting the location, time, and details of sightings. http://www.dnr.state.mi.us/wildlife/pubs/eagle_winter_obsreport.asp
MDNR Phone (Crystal Falls): 906-875-6622
Fax: 906-875-3336

The Conservancy would also appreciate knowing if you see any of these animals in the area of the Lake. We frequently hear from lake residents about interesting wildlife sightings and are keeping a record.



Photo Courtesy of Jim Hay

It's Twins

This spring Gratiot Lake bald eagles again bred successfully. Two, eight week old eaglets, a male and a female, were banded by Joe Papp in the beginning of July. The larger of the two was the female weighing in at 9 lbs 13 oz. The smaller male was feisty. He pecked at Papp and was too fidgety to hold. He spent some time in "time out", standing under some bushes waiting to be returned to the nest. Jacob Mitchell, pictured above, enjoyed holding the more docile female. The eaglets successfully fledged in the fourth week of July.

A Little Lake History

The Conservancy received a couple of comments about Gratiot Lake history recently. Please pass along your memories of lake history and any photos from its past that you would like to share.

George Swenson, Jr. dropped by the Noblet cabin and left a note identifying some of the people whose names are on the hat rack there. Evidently Rex Seeber, Julius Nachazel and Franz Schubert were all professors at Michigan Tech and deer hunting pals of Bert Noblet. They helped build the cabin along with George's father, George Swensen, Sr. and his uncle Roy Makens who were also Tech profs. George also noted that he and his wife, Janice, used to paddle their canoe across the lake in the early 1970's to visit Bert and Gladys Noblet.

Ray Eister wrote after viewing the Conservancy website that his Grandfather, Joseph Eister was one of the original settlers at Gratiot Lake. Ray comments that, "(His grandfather) lived in Central but he apparently did some farming down there at the lake....As I understood it, all of the (remaining) land ... belonged to the mining company and they would not sell any of it." The land was eventually divided between three sons. Ray adds, "When I left there in 1936, there was only one cottage beyond what we called Petermann's point and Petermann's point was North of the stream that came in from the "big" hill that existed in the road at that time. Later on there was one cottage in the...southeastern corner of the Lake by the outlet and that was built by Mr. Noblet...At the time he built that cottage there was no way to get in there except across the lake with a boat...As far as I know he hauled all the material for the cottage over there in a boat that he kept docked at my dad's dock."

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roadside areas under power line cuts in early spring or late summer. They are good wildlife plants and won't interfere with the wires.

He recommended that in wooded areas with a dense upper canopy and little midcanopy growth, felling an occasional tree to allow sunlight in can stimulate growth of medium height trees. This provides habitat for a host of species, particularly birds, which would be excluded from a more uniform height of tree growth.

Reed canary grass is a non-native grass that Sweeting spotted at the lake. It forms dense mats and out-competes a variety of native species in open meadow and wetland areas. When identified it should be removed if possible.

Sweeting pointed out that retaining trees such as hemlock and ironwood in the woods greatly increases the variety of wildlife that will thrive there. Many loggers cut out ironwood and hemlock even though they are not particularly useful as timber. However, these species are slow growing and important wildlife trees that loggers should leave in place as State foresters do.

Recommended plant and seed sources:
Prairie Nursery Madison WI
Phone: 800-476-9453 (native grasses and wildflowers)

Houghton/Keweenaw County Conservation District
600 E. Lakeshore Dr., #2., Houghton,
Phone: 906-482-0214 Fax: 906-482-6074 Website: <http://www.hkconserve.com/>

Sweeting will be available next summer to come to Gratiot and other areas in the Keweenaw Peninsula to consult with landowners.



Open House 2002

Look for more photos on the updated Conservancy website in mid January. Photos on this page courtesy of Joe Lizzadro, Gina Nicholas, and Jim Hay.



Membership Update

As of November 2002, GLC has 29 member families.

A number of generous donations have also been received.

We appreciate your support.

Please check your envelope label for your membership renewal date. Your membership is current until the date listed on the label.

Tread Lightly

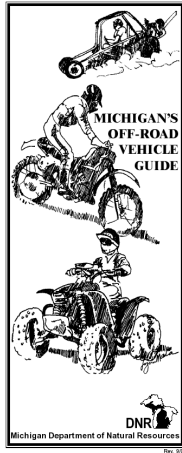
In September, a group on four wheelers illegally trespassed, cut trees and trampled vegetation on Mt. Baldy. This raised issues related to the appropriate use of these vehicles. Certainly, where private property is concerned, off road vehicle (ORV) users must obtain permission. Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) clearly states "Private land is closed to ORV operation except for the landowner, and invited guests with permission. The failure of a landowner to post or fence private property against ORV use does NOT imply consent to ORV operation."

ORV's can leave scars in sensitive areas, such as shorelines of lakes and streams, wetlands, dune areas, and steep hillsides. The National Parks Service and the Forest Service are concerned about the level of damage, some irreparable, that ORV's have caused on public lands, and the money spent in attempts to remediate this damage. Four wheeling can cause serious erosion, damage sensitive vegetation, disturb wildlife, and disrupt wildlife habitat.

ORV use has risen dramatically in the last decade. That fact coupled with modern design which allows them to access more types of terrain than in the past makes them more of a threat to sensitive areas.

In addition, many ORV's are polluting and noisy. The two and four stroke engines on ATV's on average produce over 4,000 times more carbon monoxide emission (EPA data) and 118 times as many smog-forming pollutants (California Air Resources Board data) than modern automobiles do. The MDNR recommends the use of stock mufflers and spark arrestors on ORV's.

The MDNR notes that "For the future of their sport, as well as for the future of resources, ORV users must not only know and closely follow the operating regulations, but also encourage others to do likewise." Violations of these and other rules should be reported immediately to the nearest DNR office, or to the **MDNR Law Enforcement hotline: 1-800-292-7800.**



Excerpts below are from the **Michigan Off Road Vehicle Guide** published by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Copies of the guidelines may be obtained from the MDNR, Forest Service, ORV dealerships and clubs.

ORV operation is prohibited

- in any area in a manner so as to create an erosive condition. Stay off soft, wet trails readily torn up by vehicles. Travel around meadows, steep hillsides, or streambanks and lakeshores easily scarred by churning wheels.
- on lands of another without permission. Respect landowner rights. Be a good neighbor. Obey gate closures and regulatory signs.
- in or upon the waters of any stream, river, bog, wetland, marsh, or quagmire. Michigan's soils and shorelines are fragile, and ORV operation in these areas and along stream banks and other waterways is restricted.
- at a rate of speed greater than that which is reasonable and proper.
- in a careless manner without due regard for existing conditions. Resist the urge to pioneer a new road or trail, or to cut across a switchback. Cross country operation is unlawful except in designated areas.
- in a manner to leave litter or debris.
- in hunting, pursuing, or worrying any animal. Stay away from wild animals that are rearing young or suffering from food shortage. Stress can sap scarce energy reserves.
- while transporting or possessing an alcoholic beverage that is open or uncapped (seal has been broken) or while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance.

Courtesy and respect for other trail users is a matter of safety and treading lightly. Yield the right of way.

Fungi Facts

The following fungi facts were gathered from Dana Richter's colorful slide presentation at the Eagle Harbor Community Center:

Fungi are the first and foremost recyclers of organic material. They are essential to the functioning of nature's recycling. Good soil can contain up to 50% fungi.

Eating wild mushrooms can kill you. The Keweenaw is home to many poisonous mushrooms including deadly amanitas which cause permanent liver damage. Get the advice of an expert and a good field guide handy before you cook up a batch. No simple rules (such as that a coin turns black, or that other animals can consume them) will tell you what is poisonous and what is not.



amanita



morel

Keweenaw's edible mushrooms include some boletes, true morels, honey mushrooms, shaggy manes, chanterelles, oyster mushrooms, and hen of the woods.

Always cook mushrooms (including store bought) thoroughly before eating. This destroys enzymes which can cause upsets.

Recommended mushroom guides include:

***The Mushroom Hunter's Field Guide:
All Color & Enlarged***

by Alexander H. Smith, Nancy Weber

Mushrooms of North America

by Roger Phillips

If you missed Richter's talk, the Conservancy has a videotape which you may borrow. Other tapes in the Conservancy library include videos of the eagle bandings, *What's in the Mud* (a presentation on sediment sampling at Gratiot and what it reveals), *Great Lakes, and Great Lawns* (tips for ecological lawn care). Call or e-mail Bonnie (info bottom of page 2) if you would like to borrow any of these.

Michigan Lake and Stream Associations (ML&SA) is a non-profit organization that represents 125,000 individuals in 325 member associations, including the Gratiot Lake Conservancy. ML&SA is involved in education about water resources and has helped to organize and train water monitors throughout the state. The Conservancy website is hosted by ML&SA. They are currently seeking new individual members and donations to help them continue their important work. We invite you to take a look at their website at: www.mlswa.org

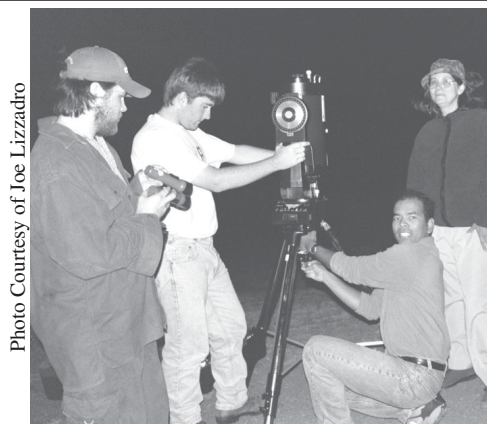


Photo Courtesy of Joe Lizzadro

Stars and Storms

About forty people came to see stars on Brockway Mountain on August 11. In the photo above Wellesley Pereira(l.) and Andrew Fleming(r.), both grad students at Michigan Tech, are setting up the Conservancy's telescope as Ben and Bonnie Hay look on. Under the guidance of Tech professor, Robert Nemiroff, we viewed heavenly sights including the moon, Venus, and the Andromeda galaxy. An approaching storm cut short the group's viewing of the Perseid meteor showers. Dr.Nemiroff and his students also demonstrated the concam, a specialized camera which takes "fish-eye" whole sky photographs (see examples at www.concam.net).

Tower Troubles

The Michigan State police towers recently erected in Keweenaw County are the subject of a petition to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The petition submitted by the National Wildlife Federation, Copper Country Audubon Society, Michigan Audubon Society, and the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition is seeking an environmental impact assessment of the towers.

Three 475 foot towers including one which is on a hilltop near the Gratiot Lake Road are in question because of their placement on the migratory fly route of thousands of birds. According to the petitioners, the towers may be extremely dangerous to migrating birds because of their placement, height, type of lights attached and guy wires which stabilize them. Nationwide, it is estimated that 5 million to 50 million birds are killed yearly by communications towers when they are drawn to the lights and collide with the wires. More care in deciding the location and design of the towers would avert such losses.

Photo Courtesy of Dorothy Jamison



Become a Member of the Gratiot Lake Conservancy!

One way to show your support for the Gratiot Lake Conservancy is to become a member. In addition to the biannual newsletter mailed to all Gratiot Lake residents, members will receive invitations to special events. As a member of the Conservancy, you will also have the opportunity to obtain discounted subscriptions to magazines of the *Orion Society* and discounted *Michigan Lakes and Streams Association* Membership.

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Membership Application

Please complete this form and mail with your check to:

- o 1 year Membership \$10 contribution
- o 3 year Membership \$25 and up
- o Additional Donation _____

The Gratiot Lake Conservancy
P.O. Box 310
Mohawk, MI 49950

PLEASE PRINT

Name: _____

Street or Box #: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

E-mail address: _____

Phone number: _____

Winter address if different from above: _____

The Gratiot Lake Conservancy is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax deductible.

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