



PO Box 421
Roscommon, MI 48653

Spring CLEAN UP!

Saturday, April 27, 2024

10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Join us!

Spring Clean Up!

April 27, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Our annual “Spring-Cleaning” event helps us spruce up the cabin and grounds for the season.

All volunteers are welcome and the event gives the public an opportunity to see the inner workings of the Preserve, as well as meet the people who help run it. No tools needed, just show up with whatever amount of time you have.

Work includes light house-keeping, trail sweeping, picking up twigs and general maintenance to help us ready the grounds for our spring and summer schedule. **Snacks included!**



Nature Play and Nature Story Time

The first Friday of each month offers opportunities for the young’uns to explore the outdoors at the Preserve. We start the morning with **Nature Story-Time** for those aged 3-6. Each program offers a read-aloud story and a hands-on activity afterwards to engage the senses and explore the outdoors. This year we’ve learned about bats, owls, deer and more! The afternoon brings **Nature Play Fridays** – an opportunity for kids of all ages to come out to the Preserve and learn through play. This program is less formal, and it is always fun to watch the games evolve as more families show up and bring their imagination and curiosity.

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Newsletter of Gahagan Nature Preserve, Inc.

P.O. Box 421, Roscommon, MI 48653 • 989-275-3217 • www.GahaganNature.org

Issue #46 • Spring 2024

ELF Kits highlight adaptations in nature

At right, students of the Sundrop Montessori Preschool examine stick-like insects, studying the characteristics that help them survive.

By Kalsa Parker Browning

The new school year brings a new topic to local classrooms. This year our Environmental Learning for the Future (ELF) program is covering adaptations – the unique features, characteristics or behaviors of our wildlife friends that help them to survive.

Students in select Roscommon Elementary School, Roscommon Middle School and Grayling Elementary classrooms, as well as the Sundrop Montessori preschool and local homeschool students, receive a monthly lesson on various plants and animals and the unique adaptations they possess.

From investigating (real!) animal skulls, to studying various types of teeth and what they mean for an animal’s diet, learning about the functions of different types of bird beaks and feathers,



to experimenting with the benefits of camouflage – students experience hands-on and interactive learning through our programs.

For the 2023-2024 school year, we are happy to report we have been the beneficiary of a generous grant from the Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund. This grant has allowed us to cover costs for additional classrooms, and bring this important nature-focused learning to our local community.

Not only does environmental education help students by improving academic achievement, it also fosters creativity, develops confidence, and creates future stewards of our resources.

We at Gahagan want to thank the Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund for their support in creating the next generation of conservationists and nature enthusiasts.

Good news, or sad, for the tree-root troll?

By Tom Dale

In 1986, 11 years before Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve was founded, a powerful storm blew through the neighborhood and took down many giant trees.

If the trees were in someone’s yard or along a street, the evidence has long since been cleaned up and hauled away. Not so in our Preserve. Standing on the bridge over Tank Creek near the Brookside entrance to the Preserve, you can see two impressive eastern white pines laying across the creek with their roots sticking way up in the air.

Those two trees and many other downed trees in the immediate area have been dead for 38 years. How long will it take until all vestiges of them have been consumed by the decomposers and washed away by the elements? Check out the story about forest mounds on the paved trail near the cabin.

An even more impressive story might be told about the survivors, trees that withstood the storm and, while no doubt suffering ill effects, were still standing after the storm had passed.

Continued on page 4

2024 Gahagan Events Calendar

All events and registration information can be found at: <https://www.gahagannature.org/calendar> unless otherwise stated. Please register in advance.

For more information or other registration methods, please contact info@gahagannature.org or 989-275-3217.

- April 10: **Attracting Birds to Your Yard**, 6-7:30 p.m. (Adult)
- April 27: **Spring Clean Up**, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- May 2: **Spring Fairy Houses**, 6-8 p.m.
- May 16: **Pond Critters Through the Microscope**, 6-8 p.m.
- May 30: **Blooms and Buds Tree ID Hike**, 6-8 p.m. (Adult)
- May 31: **Bird Banding Demonstration**, 8-10 a.m.
- May 31: **Kirtland's Warbler Festival Home Opener** at MGNP, 5 p.m. See Page 5 for details!
- June 8: **Annual June Bird Count**, at the Preserve, 8 a.m. See article on back page for details!
- June 13, 20: **Hydrology Hidden in Plain Sight**, 7-8:30 (Adult)
- June 18: **Ferns, Clubmoss and Horsetails**, 6-8 p.m. (Adult)
- June 25: **Watercolor Leaf Prints**, 6-8 p.m.
- July 6: **Kirtland's Warbler Tour**, 7-10 a.m.
- July 16: **Fen Walk**, 6-8 p.m.
- Aug. 13: **Nature Photo Frames**, 6-8 p.m.
- Aug. 15: **New Property Hike**, 6-8 p.m. (Adult)
- Sept 17: **Forestry Scavenger Hunt**, 6-8 p.m.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Join us for the first Friday of every month for **Nature Story Time**, 10:30-11:15 a.m. (ages 3-6), and **Nature-Play Friday**, 3:30-4:30 p.m. (all ages).

Gahagan Nature Camp - Explore the Preserve by attending Gahagan's Nature Camp! We will be hosting our Nature Camp from 9 a.m. to noon, June 25-27 and July 23-25. Youths entering grades 1-6 will learn about the forests of Gahagan through hands-on nature games, crafts and more! Cost is \$60 for each session; additional siblings in the same household are \$40. Register on our website: www.gahagannature.org/calendar.

4-H Forestry Camp - MSU Extension's 4-H Forestry Camp is an exciting way for youths aged 11-15 to learn more about forestry and the active forest industry in the Roscommon area. They'll gain experience using forestry tools and an appreciation for the variety of professionals who contribute to the forest industry. Activities include field trips to manufacturing facilities, guest speakers and exploring the forests of the Gahagan Nature Preserve. Save the date! July 9-11, 2024. Contact John Wurm, Roscommon 4-H Coordinator for registration details at wurmj@msu.edu or 989-275-7177.

New fall, winter programs happened at Gahagan!

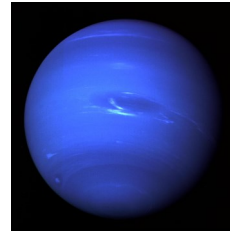
This fall and winter we've hosted many fun events out at the Preserve. Check out some highlights from a few of our favorites, and mark your calendars to join us next time!

Owl Prowl

The Owl Prowl has become one of our favorite events out at the Preserve. Board member Mike Petrucha has hosted this many times, and it always draws a crowd. Programs start inside the cabin with an informational presentation – so far we've learned all about the owl species you can find in Michigan, and learned about spring migration. Afterward we hit the trails in search of these charismatic critters.

Getting Ready to Spot Neptune

Board member Kerensa Huffman taught us all about the wild world of the planet Neptune at our Getting Ready to Spot Neptune event last fall. Participants learned about how to use online astronomy tools to get acquainted with the night sky, and how to prepare for this astrological event. We also learned all about this unique gas-giant – where it is located, what it is made of, and the harsh realities on its surface. Did you know that winds on Neptune can reach over 1,300 MPH and even break the sound barrier? Average temperatures are also -353.2 degrees F, so we advise against investing in the Neptune Real Estate market.

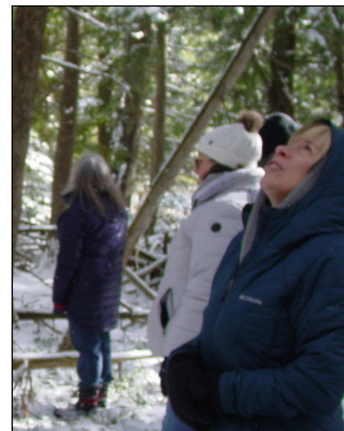


Snow-Glow Scavenger Hunt

Our first ever Snow-Glow Scavenger Hunt was a huge success, attracting 32 attendees. We started off gathering at the cabin before groups were set loose in search of glow-in-the-dark clues hidden around the Preserve. As the evening grew darker, the search got more exciting with the clues glowing more brightly against the night. Although we did not have much snow at our Snow-Glow event, we could not have asked for a more pleasant, 40-degree, February evening!

Winter Tree ID Hikes

Board member Julie Crick, and Education Director Kalsa Parker Browning hosted two Winter Tree ID hikes this season on chilly Saturday mornings. Participants had the opportunity to explore the Preserve and learn about the rich diversity of trees found here. The Preserve's range of soil moisture and other conditions provide a lot to explore. From groundwater-loving white cedar and tamarack, to jack pines found in our well-drained sandy soils, participants got an overview of many tree species during this program.



Come Join Us at the Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve!

Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve operates as a non-profit organization run by volunteers and funded by its members, generous donors and the endowment left by Marguerite. MGNP provides environmental education for many of the schools in the surrounding counties. The 96-acre preserve is open to the public for hiking, snowshoeing, birding and many other uses year round. We have an asphalt and boardwalk trail that is wheelchair friendly, travelling through the woods and wetlands along the beginnings of Tank Creek. It is through the Preserve that Marguerite Gahagan continues to share the north country she loved with others. Please contribute to keep the Preserve and its programs moving forward.

Yes, I/we want to support the Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve.

Members	Supporters	Partners	Stewards	Patrons
(up to \$30)	(\$31-\$249)	(\$250-\$499)	(\$500-\$999)	(\$1,000 and up)

Enclosed is a donation of \$ _____

Please accept this donation ___in memory / ___in honor of _____

Name: _____ Ph:(_____) _____

Mailing Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-Mail: _____ @ _____

Please write checks to Gahagan Nature Preserve, Inc. and mail to PO Box 421, Roscommon, MI 48653 • Thanks!
You can also donate, join or renew your membership online at www.GahaganNature.org



Wreath-making workshop huge hit!

Our Winter 2023 Wreath-Making Workshops, taught by Julie Crick, saw a great turnout this year. In fact, so great that we couldn't even fit everyone inside the building!

We hosted two workshops on Dec. 2nd during the Christmas in the Village event. With more than 30 attendees for each workshop, it certainly was a full cabin.

Additional folks who stopped by got some greenery they could use to make wreaths on their own. Participants learned some tree ID skills as well as the benefits of greenery and the outdoors during the wintertime.

It is always fun to watch the creativity and artistry of attendees at this cheerful holiday event!

Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve Board of Directors

Chairperson: Ken Elmore
Vice Chair: Julie Crick
Secretary: Irene Borak
Treasurer: Tracy Bosworth
Kami Boik
Alecia Catrell
Tom Dale
Patrick Demers
Dale Ekdorn
Sue Huffman
Kerensa Huffman
Don James
Mike Petrucha

Kalsa Parker Browning, Education Director

Directors meet the 2nd Monday of the month, 6 p.m.
All are welcome to attend.

MGNP Mission

"The Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve was established to perpetuate Marguerite's lifelong appreciation of the north woods. It is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to protect and maintain the diverse habitats of the preserve, and to provide environmental education for our communities."

A dream come true

Addition of 5 acres now connects Preserve to CR 100

By Tom Dale

Shortly after I was hired to be the naturalist/educator at Gahagan Nature Preserve (July 2000), Larry Dashner invited me to accompany him on a hike into the forested wetland at the northeast corner of the Preserve.

However, we didn't begin the hike at the Preserve. Instead, we began on County Road 100 west of the post office and adjacent to the gas pipeline. There we encountered a very substantial trail that continued to border the pipeline, until we came to a bridge across Tank Creek.

The creek flows into the ponds that are visible from CR 100. Most Roscommon residents and visitors alike, both recent and old-timers, readily recognize the property, on the south side of the road between the elementary school and the post office - it's just beautiful.

We continued walking pretty much due south, now along the west side of the creek in an amazing forested wetland of massive northern white cedars. Eventually, Larry informed me that we were entering Gahagan Nature Preserve property.

That we were able to take that hike

was because the property was then for sale. Larry wanted the Preserve to buy that property. That of course would have required the Preserve to seek a grant from the DNR, which we discovered we were not eligible for at that point in time.

The property was purchased instead by Chris and Barb Kalthoff.

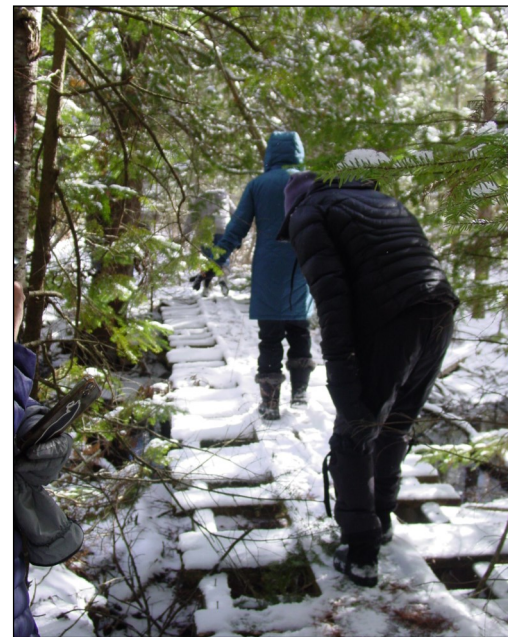
Still interested in the property, the board of directors has had several meetings with Chris and Barb over the last few years. We discussed a few scenarios in an attempt to secure a portion of the land that would be a benefit to all.

Any land purchased by the Preserve would need to include the trail to the bridge from CR 100 and a part of the forested wetland connecting to the Preserve.

Recently, the Kalthoff's generously offered to sell us a five-acre strip along the eastern edge of their property that includes that access trail, the bridge and a section of cedar-filled wetland that connects to our northern edge. The offer came at a very fair price of \$15,000.

Clearly, we must purchase this land. Well in fact, we have.

Our community of friends and members are by now aware that we were re-



Above, hikers cross Tank Creek on property recently purchased by Gahagan Nature Preserve from Barb and Chris Kalthoff. The 5-acre strip of land is predominantly old-growth white cedar and white pine, and was a delight for some winter hikers (below left).

ipients of a substantial bequest from the Larry Dashner Estate. However, it is not wise for us to spend that money. We have invested it and seek to run and manage the Preserve on the earnings from that investment.

Remember, Gahagan Nature Preserve is forever and the Dashner bequest makes that forever dream a reality.

In fact, we have borrowed from that investment fund to make the purchase. Now we must pay it back. In all, we must raise \$17,250, including the purchase price, survey, legal fees and closing costs. Now it is up to us, the friends and members of the Preserve, to raise the money.

We are off to a good start. Brothers, John and Cliff Colwell of Higgins Lake and San Diego, have offered a challenge. They each have volunteered to put in \$3,750. We have had support from an anonymous donor of \$2,500 and a donation from the Roscommon Higgins Lake Lions Club of \$750.

So, the rest of us must raise the remaining \$5,300. I am absolutely certain that we can.

A few years ago, when we discovered that the ancient cabin roof was leaking, we raised the needed money in just a few weeks. Let's do that again. Let's help make Larry's dream of a trail connecting Gahagan with CR 100 a reality.



Friends of MGNP - thank you donors!

The following gifts were received between March 16, 2023 and March 15, 2024:

Patrons (\$1,000 and up)

Cliff and Carolyn Colwell
Ken Elmore
Brian and Mary Hutchins
Duncan and Kathleen Lawrence
Roscommon Higgins Lake Lions Club
Bill and Patti Sarkella
Tom Schupbach
Anonymous

Partners (\$250-\$499)

Tom and Connie Allen
Fifth Street Market
Anne Gahagan and Rick Dennis
Carl and Sue Jock
Scott and Sue Mires
Kathy and Mike Wahl

Supporters (\$31-\$249)

Bob Andrus
Tom and Wilma Barber
Linda Beebe
Debra Beehler
Ty and Carolyn Black
Theresa Blamer
Greg Bodker
Irene Borak
Sharon Bouselle
Lisa Burmester

Doug and Alecia Catrell
Fred and Carol Chidester
Julie Crick
Tom Dale
Daniel Decker
Karen Demers
Troy Fairbanks and Nancy Martindale
Christine Fowler
Don and Elaine Granzine
Pauline Jobson
Ellen and Greg Katalenich
Anne and Russell Kidd
Kirtland Garden Club
Tom and Elisabeth Kish
Rich and Cathy Koupal
Mary Alice McKindles
Tony Medina
Jeff and Millie Mellgren
Kim and Bill Morley
Mike and JoAnn Muston
Don and Suzanne Pennell
Mike Petruca
Stewart Powrie
Ralph and Nancy Rucinski
Al Schultz
Richard Seton
Elaine Tank
JoAnn VanderMolen
Kathy VanderMolen and Gary Harms
Eleanor Washburn
Darlene Weinrich
Roberta Werle

Karrie and Gabe Williams

Members

Julie Boushelle
Chuck and Linda Brick
Mike Burnside
Carole Chilton
Karen Coe
Debra Collins
Dan Dawson
Patti Dombrowski
Lyssa Durbin
Caryl and Ed Fischer
Jim and Carol Garlo
Bob Gennrich
Jack Hipchen
Tom and MaryLou Jennette
Kathryn Koch
Nilah Mason
Mary Alice McKindles
Sarah and Greg Meiser
Cheryl Mitchell
Tom and Patti Moreau
Doug and Ginny Nagel
Mary O'Brien
Theresa O'Brien
Richard and Carol Silverman
Jay and Lorrene Spaulding
Lisa Sutton
Anna and Don Sylvester
Pam and Jim Tucker
Bill and Marjorie Tudor
Robert Williams
Susan Worden

Memorials and Honoraria:

In memory of William Blamer
Theresa Blamer
In memory of Gary Boushelle
Sharon Boushelle
In memory of Phyllis Dale
Kathryn Koch
Jeff and Millie Mellgren
Ralph and Nancy Rucinski
In memory of Helen Murphy Proctor
Mary Alice McKindles
In memory of Jim Mason
Nilah Mason
In memory of Susan Pavelka
Christine Fowler
In memory of Toni Seton
Richard Seton
In memory of Robert Tupper
Julie Boushelle
In memory of Jerry Weinrich
Darlene Weinrich
Theresa Blamer
Jim and Carol Garlo
Mike Petruca

Environmental Learning for the Future (ELF) Program Supporters

Mary Alice McKindles
Darlene Weinrich



GAHAGAN NATURE PRESERVE

You can find us at 209 W Maplehurst Rd in Roscommon

www.GahaganNature.org

(989) 275-3217 ~ info@GahaganNature.org

Thank you for helping us grow

Please don't forget to take care of your MGNP membership dues - they're one of the biggest sources of revenue for our organization. We need to not only hang on to every membership we have, we need to grow as well. So spread the word by sharing this newsletter!

If able, log on to www.GahaganNature.org and quickly take care of your dues through the secure PayPal link, or by entering your debit/credit information as a stand-alone purchase.

You can also make a personal donation or a memorial contribution through a link on the website. So please, don't forget to join us by updating your membership today.

If you would like to be removed from the mailing list, just Email us at info@GahaganNature.org or call 989-275-3217.

Fanciful Fairy Houses adorn the paths at the Preserve!

Thank you to our friend Lowell Karinen for the donation of birdhouses that were transformed into fairy homes in November. Be sure to check the event calendar

(Page 2) for the next fun session!



Birds of Gahagan Nature Preserve

Yellow-throated vireo

By Mike Petrucha

In the Fall 2023 newsletter, we featured a new species found during the June bird count at GNP, the American Woodcock. Here we talk about another new species from the 2023 count, the yellow-throated vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*). This vireo species breeds in mature deciduous forests in eastern North America, preferring trees such as oaks and maples along streams, lakes and roadsides.

It is one of the most colorful members of its family with a



Yellow-throated vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*)

bright yellow throat and eye spectacles, olive head and back, gray tail and wings with thick, white wing bars, a white belly, and a black, slightly hooked

beak. Its song is slow and raspy sounding (like a sleepy scarlet tanager with a sore throat). Yellow-throated vireos primarily eat spiders and insects such as, moths, stinkbugs, caterpillars, beetles and flies, and occasionally will eat fruits and seeds. They feed in the middle and upper parts of the forest, slowly hopping around, picking insects from bare branches and leaves.

Before finding a mate, males search for spots to build a nest, placing a few bits of material in several potential spots. When the female arrives, she chooses where to put the nest, either selecting one of the male's locations or one of her own. The nest is usually near the top of a tree near the forest's edge 20 to 50 feet above the ground. The male defends the nesting territory by singing constantly. Both parents build the thick-walled, open cup nest, with the rim woven onto a horizontal forked twig. The nest is made of weeds, shreds of bark, grass, leaves and plant fibers. The outside of the nest is camouflaged with spiderwebs, lichens, and mosses and is lined with fine grass and pine needles.

Females lay 3-5 eggs which are incubated by both parents. The nestlings hatch after 14-15 days and are fed by both parents. After another 14-15 days, the young leave the nest with the parents dividing the fledglings, and each adult cares for part of the brood. Yellow-throated Vireos migrate to Central America, northwest South America, and the Caribbean islands where they winter in tropical lowlands and foothills, in habitats ranging from rain forest to dry scrub.



To enter the Preserve from the Brookside entrance, young feet had to pass by the home of the tree-root Troll. The acquisition of an adjacent two acres will move the trail away from this exposed area.

Continued from front page

A very good example can be seen just mere feet away from the ones that fell. Five towering white pines stood together and withstood the wind. The trail into the Preserve from Brookside had to pass right along and over their upturned roots.

Many roots had to be trimmed to keep hikers from tripping. And so, those trees have had to withstand yet another challenge to their survival as many thousands of feet climbed on, tripped over and trampled the very ground that sustained them.

The very youngest hikers, fearing the unknown lurking under those leaning trees, would sometimes hurry past while trying to sneak a peek.

That the trail had to pass right over and around those upturned roots dates to the earliest days of the Preserve. While we were able to buy nine acres from the landowners, we were only able to get an easement along the property boundary that bordered the two acres that they kept. That determined the route for the access trail.

More recently, the landowners, John and Deb Rosczyk, offered those remaining two acres for sale. A very generous donor from the HeadWaters Land Conservancy assisted the Preserve and made it possible to purchase those remaining two acres.

Now we will be able to reroute the trail away from those exposed roots. We are not sure yet, however, if that is good news or sad news for the Troll who lives among those roots.

Celebrating their spring return

2024 Kirtland's Warbler Festival weekend is May 31 - June 1

FRIDAY at Gahagan Nature Preserve

Festivities begin Friday, May 31, with a **BIRD-BANDING DEMONSTRATION** from 8-10 a.m. at the Gahagan Nature Preserve. Find out why birds are banded, what it tells us about their lives and their habitat. See how birds are captured, banded and measured. Discover how bird banding data is useful for scientific research, management and conservation purposes. *Bird banding is weather dependent as it can be harmful for the birds in times of inclement weather or high winds.*

If you're not a morning person, kick off the weekend instead with the **FRIDAY HOME OPENER** at Gahagan. Enjoy a social evening with wine and beer tasting along with appetizers and a scavenger hunt starting at 5 p.m.

At 7 p.m., our keynote speaker, **KAITLYN KELLY**, will present *Fight for Survival: Michigan's Endangered Butterflies*. Katie is an endangered species biologist at the Michigan Ecological Services Field Office. She focuses on Mitchell's satyr butterfly, Poweshiek skipperling, Michigan monkey-flower and the whooping crane. In addition, she works on butterfly Safe Harbor Agreements and Habitat Conservation Plans and, most recently, the Michigan Insecticide Application tools. She has an extensive background in migratory birds, including 16 Kirtland's warbler censuses.



SATURDAY in downtown Roscommon

Start the festival with a **GUIDED TOUR** to see the Kirtland's warbler in person. The first tour leaves at 7:30 a.m. from the CRAF Center, with a second tour at 10 a.m.

The rest of the festival activities begin at 10 a.m. and run until 4 p.m.

There are plenty of children's activities under the **Kids' Tent**.

The popular **Children's Market** will be back from noon to 3 pm.

Art will be on display by **featured artist Sherry Nelson**, along with the winners of the U.S.

Forest Service's **Young Artists Contest**.

Bill Rapai from the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance will have two sessions of the **Kirtland's Warbler Migration Game**.

You can browse the wares of the vendors, ask questions from the various natural resource agencies and organizations, and be entertained with live music.

Featured Presenters

For more information go to the Kirtland's Warbler Festival Facebook page or email us at kirtlandsfestival@gmail.com.



12:30-1:20 p.m.
Dr. Steve Roels and *Seeing the Jack Pine Forest for the Species*. Steve is a

conservation biologist with American Bird Conservancy and Kirtland's Warbler Conservation Team Coordinator.



1:30-2:30 p.m. Dr. David Evers with *Loons as Indicators of Mercury in the Environment: Local Beginnings to Global Interests*. Dave was born and raised in Roscommon! He received a PhD in 2001

assessing mercury in the environment through a key indicator, the common loon. He founded the non-profit Biodiversity Research Institute in 1998. **Dave is also the featured author.**



2:40-3:40 p.m.
Jim McGrath presents *Michigan*

Turtles in Trouble. The founder of Nature Discovery, Jim has more than 34 years of experience as an interpretive naturalist.

Calling all birders — 2024 Bird Count is June 8

Join us Saturday, June 8, for the 14th Gahagan June Bird Count. Meet a little before 8 a.m. at the Gahagan parking lot to break into groups. We'll walk the trails counting all the birds we see and hear.

We are usually done by 10 a.m.

If you would like to participate, go to <https://www.gahagannature.org/calendar>.

In 2023 we counted 116 individuals of 37 species in two hours.

Results of past counts can be seen on eBird by going to www.ebird.org. Click on the "Explore" tab, select "Explore Hotspots," then type in "Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve."