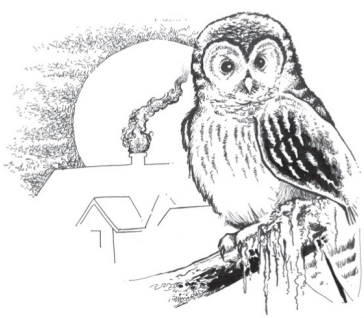


Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve
P.O. Box 421
Roscommon, MI 48653



SPRING CLEAN UP AT GAHAGAN

Saturday, May 1, 2021 See inside for details.

May at Marguerite’s Cabin

Past posts from Marguerite Gahagan’s ‘Pine Whispers’ column in The North Woods Call
May 1, 1968 - Roscommon, Michigan

Only a few young oaks still cling to old leaves. The woods had been ready to burst into the rhythm of spring, but winter’s last feeble fling slowed wild raisin leaves, stopped marsh marigold buds in the swamp. Yet it could not stop the pulse of the earth. Wild columbine sprouted, pushing up through the sodden pine needles, brown brakes and old leaves.

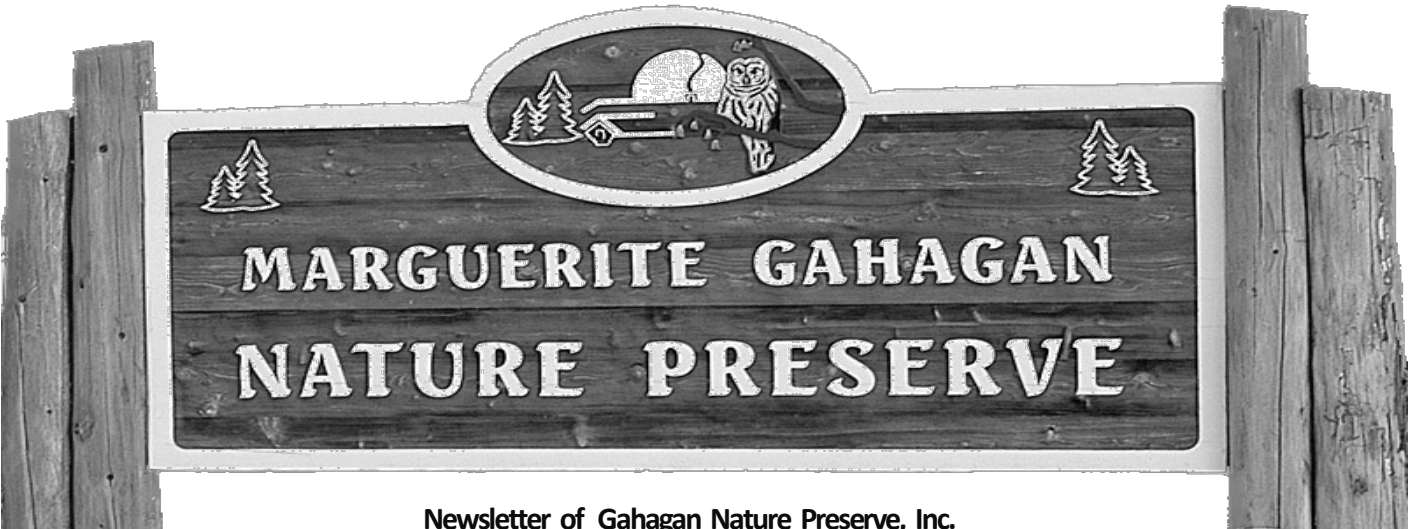
A chickadee sang. The snow could not interrupt nest building. The chickadee flew to a container swinging in back of the cabin. Instead of seeds or suet, it holds a rabbit skin a hunter had given me for just this purpose. Through the opening went the chickadee. It worked long and carefully snipping off the hairs until it held a beakful as big as its head. It came to the opening, looked around for any waiting enemy, giving the appearance of a little bird with a giant mustache, and flew off to its nest to line it with the soft fur.

Cabin Roof Project



The cabin needs a new roof. The current roof was finished during the time that the cabin was Marguerite’s home, more than 30 years ago. A few years back, the cabin developed a leak caused by ice build up in a roof valley. We discovered an area of the attic that was not properly insulated and remedied that issue. But that didn’t change the aged roof. The current estimate for a steel roof to match the garage is \$11,400. We just don’t have that available. We have decided to establish a fund and try to place a portion of the new roof cost in savings each year until we have saved enough to complete the job. We invite our friends and patrons to contribute to the fund and help us protect Marguerite’s cabin well into the future. We will keep you informed on our progress in each future newsletter.

If you are able to help, note “Cabin Roof “ with your contribution. Thank you for your support!



Newsletter of Gahagan Nature Preserve, Inc.

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

Issue# 40 ~ Spring 2021

Navigating the Preserve Through COVID

By Brian Hutchins

Last year was a rocky road for each of us. The start of 2021 sees some light but throws us much of the same challenges. Your Gahagan Preserve has felt the sting as well. The Preserve’s board has made some tough decisions to keep it financially sound and to be ready for what the world looks like when we reach the pandemic’s other side. We know it won’t be the same.

It has been nearly a quarter century since Marguerite passed leaving her land and a small endowment from her estate that eventually began the preserve. From this, a start-up group of citizens developed a vision that would match what Marguerite would have liked. First was to manage her land in a way that kept it as home to the “critters” she wrote about and for which she advocated. Providing environmental education to teach about our natural world and the need to protect spaceship-earth was our second goal.

The quick onset of the pandemic caught us just when we were planning for the normally-active spring school field trip program. Obviously they would not happen as schools would close. We waited to see if our summer camps would be viable. MSU extension and 4-H cancelled events that they had planned at the preserve during the summer and so did we. The autumn school field trips and the annual open house were next to fall victim. Each of these provide income via fees, grants and donations that help cover our costs. “Winter” came early in 2020 for each of us, Gahagan Preserve was no exception.

We developed a great partnership with MSU Extension in recent years. Julie Crick is our local agent and joined on as a board member. Through Julie, MSU has provided their ZOOM platform so the board can conduct its business when outdoor meetings by the new kiosk seating area wouldn’t be pleasant. While virtual meetings are necessary and helpful, they have limits when dealing with a crisis.

The recession of 2008 was Gahagan Preserve’s first taste of an unforeseen national crisis. Still in its beginning years, the preserve invested the endowment primarily in CD’s that had good interest rates. We had these rates locked in for a while but knew they would be near zero in the future. We spent several months developing a new financial plan. It hinged on maintaining a core “endowment,” approximately equal to what Marguerite left us, by conservatively investing in stocks and bonds. We planned to run the yearly budget on fees, grants, memberships, donations with earnings on the endowment as a fallback during poor income years. We hoped that we could build the “endowment” portion with time. This endowment is how and why Gahagan has been able to be successful.

The financial plan has worked so far - with a little bit of luck and some hard decisions. Income fell considerably in 2020 for the reasons noted above. Donations are down, as we expected - many have less income and local businesses have closed for periods of time. Fortunately, the stock market heated up. We have had to dip into the endowment to stay afloat. At this point, the hot financial market has offset the loss of revenue as we cut costs.

Continued on page 3

Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve
Board of Directors

Chairperson: Tom Dale
Vice Chair: Brian Hutchins
Secretary: Julie Crick
Irene Borak
Alecia Catrell
Dale Ekdome
Ken Elmore
Sue Huffman
Mike Petrucha

Tracy Bosworth, Executive Director
(989) 390-0903 ~ adm@GahaganNature.org
www.GahaganNature.org
Board meets 2nd Monday of the month, 7 PM. Please join in!
All are welcome to attend

Gahagan 2021 Events

May 1 : Spring Clean– Up at MGNP/Village of Rosco
May 8-9: Roscommon Canoe Classic Wallace Park
June 2: Bird Count 8:00 am at MGNP
June 4: Lakesaver’s Day MGNP w/Higgins Lake Foundation
June 5 : Virtual Kirtland’s Warbler Festival
June 12: South Branch AuSable River Monitoring

With COVID 19 restrictions, Summer Camps are in flux.
Gahagan’s Nature Camp as well as the MSU Extension Forestry
and 4-H Exploration camps to be held at Gahagan are currently
in the tentative planning stages. Please check the Gahagan and
MSU Extension 4-H websites for updated information.

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 60-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 it’s 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)

I/We am/are making a donation of \$_____ I/We are including \$_____ for the Cabin Roof Project
Please accept this donation __in memory __in honor of _____

Name:_____ Ph:(_____)_____
Mailing Address:_____ City:_____ State:_____ Zip:_____
E-Mail:_____@_____

Please make checks to Gahagan Nature Preserve, Inc. and mail to P.O. Box 421, Roscommon, MI 48653 Thanks!

Friends of
Gahagan

Thank you for answering “The North Woods Call” by supporting Gahagan Nature Preserve.
The following gifts were received between March 16, 2020 and March 15, 2021.
We try hard to thank everyone, if we missed you please tell us and know that we appreciate you.

Patrons (\$1,000 and up)

Cliff & Carolyn Colwell
Ken Elmore
The San Diego Foundation
Bill and Patti Sarkella

Stewards (\$500-\$999)

Susan Huffman

Partners (\$250-\$499)

Sherwood & Sharon Boudeman
John & Betty Colwell
Carl & Sue Jock
Liz & Bernie Milnes
Roscommon Auto Recyclers
John & Liz Wade
Mike & Kathy Wahl

Supporters (\$31-\$249)

Tom & Connie Allen
Bob Andrus
Debra Beehler
John & Jeanie Bennick
Rich & Jackie Bertsch
Irene Borak
Mark & Tracy Bosworth
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Rich & Kathy Burgis
Lisa Burmester
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Tom & Phyllis Dale
Troy Daniels
Karen Demers
Dale & Theresa Ekdome
Troy Fairbanks-Nancy Martindale
Fifth Street Market
Anne Gahagan & Richard Dennis
Stuart & Sandi Hamill
Brian & Mary Hutchins
Pauline Jobson
Joyce & Jerry Johnston
Kathy Kaufman & Rich Jaskowski
Kirtland Garden Club
Tom & Elisaberth Kish
Rich & Cathy Koupal
Tom & Jane Kozlowski
Cynthia Krupp
Mary Alice McKindles
Jack & Susan Nanry
Northern Family Dentistry
Theresa O'Brien
Don & Suzanne Pennell
Mike Petrucha
Bruce & Betty Phillips
Stewart Powrie
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Richard Seton
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Sue, Scott & Macy Mires
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Peggy & Mark Scott
Rich & Carol Silverman
St. Helen Monument
Jim & Pam Tucker
Mike VanBuren
JoAnn VanderMolen
Kathy VanderMolen-Gary Harms
Eleanor Washburn
Clarice & Robert Williams

In memory of Julia Borak

Albert & Audrey Schultz

In memory of Helen Proctor

Mary Alice McKindles

In memory of Roy Milnes Jr.

Bernie & Liz Milnes

In Memory of Richard Clapp

Martha Clapp

In Memory of Jerry Boone

Phylis & Tom Dale

In Memory of Joanne Bouck

Karen Demers

In Memory of Toni Seton

Richard Seton

In memory of Veryl Gulick

St. Helen Monument
Joyce & Tom Zeneberg

In memory of Michael Machleit

Peggy & Mark Scott

In memory of Louise Heilbronn

Dr. William Burrows

In Memory of Don & Terry Nanry

Jack & Susan Nanry

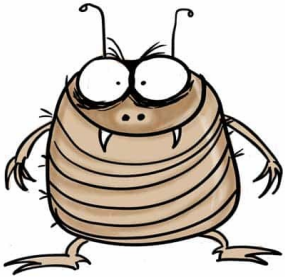
In honor of The North Woods Call

Sharon & Woody Boudeman

In Honor of Family & Friends

Sharon & Gary Boushelle

We are truly grateful for your
generosity as well as your
continued support.



Flea Bites

By Tom Dale

So, Nat’ralists observe , a Flea
Hath smaller fleas that on him prey,
And these have smaller Fleas to bite em,
And so proceed ad infinitum.

- Jonathan Swift 1667-1745

We humans have many, many “Fleas that bite us.” Let’s see, there are actual fleas, plus mosquitoes and ticks (I sure do hate ticks), and also worms (Google “Guinea Worm” for a real scare). We sure can’t over-look the schistosoma that cause Swimmers Itch. Right, I know, they are carried by ducks and snails, but the actual villain is a microscopic worm. Still smaller are the protozoa, such as the very lethal agent of malaria.

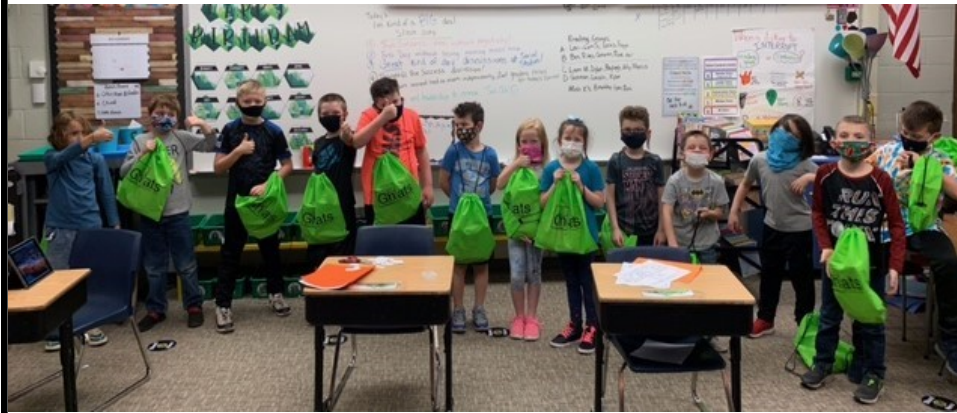
Yet even smaller are the bacteria that cause so many infections. Amazingly, the bacteria and we people too, are attacked by creatures that are infinitesimally smaller, the virus. The bacteria-infecting virus, the bacteriophage, land on their host, then fit securely into plug-in sites and then, like a spring-loaded weapon, stab into the bacterium and inject their DNA and then.... take over.

That seems to be the game played by all viruses; get their genes into the host’s cells and take over. The spikes on COVID19 serve that purpose, they lock the virus onto host cell membrane receptor sites and move in. As the virus proceeds to make us sick, our immune system goes to work and hopefully, eventually defeats the virus. But does it, really? Many a virus that have attacked us through-out the ages, only eventually to be defeated by our immune system, are still here within us, fused into our DNA. Scientists estimate that fully 8% of our genome are those imbedded viral genes. Some of them have eventually been repurposed by the host and now serve vital functions. But that is a whole other story...

Someday, later in life, that chicken pox viral DNA that we picked up as children may again begin to function as a virus and bang – shingles happens. And the dang “Flea” strikes again. Better get your shingles vaccine. And of course, for the past year and likely for most of this year, we will be mired in the COVID19 pandemic. Now we have several COVID vaccines so that trigger our immune system. If we are ever to get control of the pandemic, scientists tell us that 80% of us must get one of those vaccines.

GNATS

As the COVID restraints caused the cancellation of 2020-2021 field trips to the preserve and the Visiting Naturalist program, Gahagan had some grant funds to reallocate. Survey responses from Roscommon Area Public School's K-5 staff showed teachers were interested in student supplies. All kindergarten through fifth -rade students were provided a GNATS (Gahagan Nature Art Technology and Science) backpack that contained school supplies such as pencils, crayons, markers, scissors and a notebook to assist with at home supplies during home learning times. Not to be overlooked, teaching staff at the Roscommon Elementary and Middle schools also received a GNATS "swag bag" with assorted items including a copy of Pine Whispers.



Gahagan is still here, but we miss you. Throw on something warm and bring your family out to visit.

These are challenging times for us all, and we so hope that you are in good spirits and health.

*"Of all the paths you take in life,
make sure a few of them are dirt."
-~John Muir*

Navigating through COVID continued.....

In some ways we are in the same financial-boat as we were in 2008. There are a couple large differences. In 2020 we have lost virtually all of our income from education-related fees or grants. The 2008 problem did not affect the demand for school field trips, at least not immediately, and some income flowed in as we sorted things out. With the virus raging, we have not been able to meet face-to-face in a meaningful way to head this off and plot our future.

So what cost cutting have we done? We cancelled a contract last spring to have new, more energy-efficient windows installed in the cabin and then drained the water and shut the cabin for the winter. Our executive director reduced her small stipend and Education Director's hours have been significantly reduced. We know there will be no spring 2021 field trips for the schools and expect no demand in the autumn as well. More changes to the education director's position are likely. Some expenses were unavoidable. The new kiosk seating that had materials purchased and received partial grant funding during 2019 was completed. We also had to rebuild a portion of boardwalk that had collapsed. A new education initiative called GNATS and discussed further in the newsletter was rejiggered when it was clear that autumn would be a challenge at the schools.

So let's end on a good note. Use of the trails at Gahagan is higher than ever. Funny how a pandemic, "distancing" and the push by health officials to commune outdoors changes things. The Preserve made some adjustments in the education realm. We helped host the Virtual Kirtland Warbler Festival which utilized the incentives of Geocaching to get people into nature and learn about our local celebrity bird. BioBlitz, which we highlighted in last Fall's newsletter fit well into a COVID world. We are using 2021 to adjust or reinvent our approach to environment education. We know that schools won't be the same. We have seen signs of this even before the pandemic. We also have seen grant support for some of our programs disappear with changing financials.

Lastly, we are a bunch of volunteers that try hard to keep Gahagan Preserve, a non-profit, running well. We have buildings and infrastructure to maintain. None of it comes from a regular income stream or tax dollars. That means keeping an eye on our finances, using the money well and bugging you and others for money to help out. Please keep that in mind. Also, human resources are often our most critical need. Is there something about our natural world that you would like to teach others? Eventually we will be able to teach again. Are you handy with a saw or hammer? We have work projects to keep trails going and boardwalks sturdy. Do you have financial or planning skills? Consider a board position. Do you have youth and enthusiasm? We plan on being around for a while and you can drive Gahagan towards its future.

CLEAN UP

Every spring, we call on members and volunteers to help ready the preserve for spring field trips. While school visits are on hold, we still need help to prepare the preserve for the season.

This year the Gahagan event will coincide with the Village of Roscommon's Community Clean-Up. On Saturday, May 1st, from 9 AM to Noon we will meet to spruce up the cabin and trails. Breakfast Bites and Coffee will be available at Gahagan and a Hot Dog lunch will be served at 1:00 at the AuSable River Center. Please consider joining in for a few minutes or a few hours.



Waste Ed

As Roscommon Middle School fifth graders could not visit the preserve, Tracy Bosworth led them on a tour of the district's wastewater facility. The site is an open, aerobic system that is contained entirely on school property.



PINE WHISPERS

The Biography & Writings of Marguerite Gahagan founder and publisher of the North Woods Call

During a news reporting career spanning from 1930 to 1980, Marguerite became Michigan's preeminent voice for conservation issues. Activist, humanist, novelist and national award-winning reporter, learn of her incredible life and a legacy that continues to shape our outdoors today.

Great reading for the cabin
Wonderful gift for the nature lover

For more information and to order visit
www.GahaganNature.org

Sales benefit the environmental education programs of the Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve



AuSable River Watershed Monitoring

Our group of devoted river lovers has been diligently monitoring our river for 12 years. We began as MiCorp Project in 2008. The conclusion is that ours is a mighty nice river and in great shape. We were unable to monitor in 2020 because, well, you know why. We will resume the effort June 12, 2021, while limiting our effort to just the South Branch.

If you want to join in, just contact Tom Dale at 989-889-9562 or thdale@core, for all the particulars.

2021 June Gahagan Bird Count By Mike Petrucha

After a hiatus of 10 years, the June Gahagan Bird Count returned in 2020 where we counted 84 individuals of 29 species. The 2021 count will be held Wednesday June 2nd, 2021. We will meet a little before 8:00 AM at the Gahagan parking lot to break into groups, then walk the trails counting all the birds we see and hear. If you would like to participate, or just tag along for some outdoors, social-distanced fun, contact Mike Petrucha at mepetrucha@hotmail.com.

All of the past Gahagan Bird Counts can be seen on eBird. eBird is an online database of bird observations launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at Cornell University and the National Audubon Society. eBird provides scientists, researchers and amateur naturalists with real-time data about bird distribution and abundance. It gathers information, photos, audio recordings and produces real-time maps of species distribution, giving users the most current and useful birding information. Similar to iNaturalist, observations made by individuals are recorded through a global database allowing hundreds of thousands to gather data on biodiversity for use in science.

eBird

Find the Gahagan counts by going to: www.ebird.org.

Click on the "Explore" tab

Click on "Explore Hotspots"

Then type in "Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve."

A Truly Win-Win Solution

Tracy Bosworth

In June 2013, a fire originating in the brush pile of the Higgins Township compost site spread onto the preserve. Fortunately, the DNR fire crew had it out in no time. The fire crossed one of our trails and to prevent further advance, they constructed a plowline, the scar of which is still evident on the white trail.

Since then, Gahagan has taken measures to mitigate wildfire risk to our buildings and property by using “firewise” management practices. In June of 2015 we initiated a five-acre timber cut adjacent to the compost site. The cut cleaned a portion of the property heavily disturbed by DNR-trenched firebreaks, thinned an area of trees which were at the end of their life cycle and created a buffer zone along the property line. Additionally, we have cleared brush and vegetation surrounding our structures, contracted the removal of trees near the interpretive center and removed downed brush from storm events. Leaving all that “nature” on the ground near the cabin and garage just adds fuel to any future wildfire, so we continue to make a concerted effort to clear and even haul it away. Where you ask? Well, to the compost site next door.

The compost site experiences a high volume of brush accumulation in early spring, late fall and after a storm event. Brush chipping and mulch hauling done in 2017 by the Township removed a tremendous amount of the material, but an unsightly, unchip-pable, monstrous pile at the west end of the site (near Gahagan’s parking lot) remained.

In February of 2020, Higgins Township deeded the Village of Roscommon the three-acre compost site and the Village has made some noticeable changes. The edges of the lot have been cleared. Delineated areas for brush, leaves and grass clippings have been marked. Non-compost items have been removed. Hours are clearly posted and staffed. **However, the most noticeable change has been the removal of the massive brush pile.**

This past October, the Village of Roscommon approved a motion to provide funds to remove the brush. Early in December, S&J Excavating of Roscommon started working the mass. After spending an entire day “compressing,” they began filling a rotating dump truck caravan. It took four long days to eradicate the heap. The fire hazard has been greatly reduced and management of incoming brush is now under control. But it gets even better! While working with the Village on the possible joint solution to the problem, we discovered Gahagan’s current parking lot was not really “ours.” The piece that we have fenced and have been using is actually the western portion of the three-acre compost site. It was not long before we came to a terrific resolution. Gahagan was in possession of a one-acre lot in the Industrial Park directly across the street from the entrance to the preserve. The Village was gracious enough to offer an exchange of 400 yards of the compost property for the Industrial Park parcel.

To date, the compost property has been surveyed, staked, split and the new deeds have been registered with the County of Roscommon. Not only is Gahagan’s current parking area secure, we have plenty of room to expand our capacity should we need more space in the future. Best of all though, we can rest a bit easier during wildfire season.



Our gratitude to Ron Alden, Village Manager, for spearheading the project

Sincerest appreciation to the Village of Roscommon Council for their support

Kudos to the S&J Excavation Crew and Wade Hartman for a job well done

MGNP

Mission

“The Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve was established to perpetuate Marguerite’s life-long 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.”

Adventure Lab Mike Petrucha

The Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve Adventure Lab went live on June 24, 2020 and as of this writing, has been completed 40 times, all with positive comments. Four other people completed just the first stop. There have been 26 ratings, all 5 out of 5 stars! For more information on the Gahagan lab and Adventure Labs in general, download the free Adventure Lab app. Then select a nearby Adventure, like ours at Gahagan, from the map or list, then navigate to the Adventure location and follow the instructions in the description.

Roscommon is home to another Adventure Lab, the Virtual Kirtland’s Warbler Festival that went live November 11, 2020. As you may have deduced from the title, it is a virtual representation of the festival consisting of five stops, with each stop representing a different aspect of the festival. The lab starts at the Michigan Firemen’s Memorial who lend their trolley to the festival for Kirtland’s Warbler tours. Next up is Gahagan, home of the Friday Home Opener and headquarters of the festival planning committee. The third stop is the CRAF Center where the physical festival is held. Then you go to Ball Cemetery, the location where the festival’s Kirtland’s tours go. The final stop takes you to the Roscommon campus of Kirtland Community College, previous home of the festival for many years. Thus far, this adventure has been completed 20 times. with 15 ratings averaging 4.5 stars.

Kirtland’s Warbler GeoTrail Mike Petrucha

As reported in previous newsletters, the Kirtland’s Warbler Festival in partnership with Gahagan, launched the Kirtland’s Warbler GeoTrail on 6 June 2020. Over 100 enthusiastic geocachers attended and as all 100 initial geocoins were earned during the launch weekend, 250 additional coins were ordered.

As of 31 December 2020, the 25 KWGT geocaches were found 3,555 times on 122 different days by 298 individual geocachers and earned 508 favorite points. Favorite points are earned by premium (paying) geocachers for every 10 geocaches they find and are awarded to the most enjoyed caches. A total of 129 passports have been turned in. The Kirtland’s Warbler GeoTrail continues and folks can follow its 130 mile loop with 25 hidden caches anytime throughout the non-snowy months.

Want to do the Loop? Google how to geocache, download a geocaching app, and print the coordinates for the KWGT from a link on our www.GahaganNature.com website.

Bioblitz Tracy Bosworth

In June of 2020, MGNP In conjunction with MSU Extension 4H, launched a Roscommon County BioBlitz through an online program called iNaturalist. The BioBlitz goal is to make a record of the biodiversity of plant and animal species in a specified area within a specified time frame. The County wide BioBlitz ended in September, however posting observations of plant and animal specimens from Gahagan property will continue. Through continual posting, we build and expand our profile in a world-wide diversity databank.

How to participate:

1. Grab your camera or phone and head to Gahagan. When you find something interesting, take pictures of it. Get clear pictures, close up, and from different angles, if possible. Any living thing like a plant, animal, insect, or fungus can be an observation on iNaturalist
2. Set up an account on the iNaturalist website or app on your phone. Follow the prompts and to find Roscommon County and join the “Gahagan Nature Nerds.”

We ask that participants:

- Try not to disturb the nature you are observing and recording.
- Stay on trails and do not handle wildlife.
- Observe social distancing.
- Take care to protect yourselves from ticks and other insects.

Warbler Festival Goes Virtual Mike Petrucha

Due to the ongoing COVID -19 pandemic, there will not be a physical Kirtland’s Warbler Festival this year. However, you will still be able to get your Kirtland’s Warbler fix on June 5th, 2021 as we will hold a Virtual Kirtland’s Warbler Festival online starting at 9:00 AM. We will start the day with a virtual tour out to the breeding habitat to see and hear Kirtland’s Warblers, and get an overview of their life history. After the virtual tour, there will be presentations on what happens now that Kirtland’s Warblers have been delisted from the Endangered Species List.

For more information and updates, go to the Kirtland’s Warbler Festival Facebook page at:

www.facebook.com/kirtlandwarblerfestival.

Make sure to like the page so you don’t miss any updates!