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Newsletter of the Gahagan Nature Preserve



Issue #48 Spring 2025

Do you have a scenic photo of Gahagan you'd like to share? Email it to info@gahagannature.org to be considered for our next newsletter!

Spring Clean Up

Saturday, April 26th, 2025
10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Join us!

Gahagan Nature Camps

Explore the outdoors through hands-on activities at the Preserve! We are hosting two weeks of Nature Camps for youth entering grades K-6 this summer. Each week's program features different activities, and is specifically designed to engage, challenge, and excite with a variety of outdoor-focused fun. Programs are held each day, Monday-Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Register online at www.GahaganNature.org/nature-camp. Cost for camp is \$160 per child.

June 30th—July 3rd

Mad Scientists

Join us for our "Mad Scientists" week where youth explore the many -ologies found at Gahagan. Campers will investigate their surroundings, ask questions, and make new discoveries of the world around them.

July 28th—31st

Mud Masters

Get messy for "Mud Masters" week! Campers will learn all about the incredible diversity of life found in the soil. Youth will delve into the dirt (and mud!) and get up close and personal with this mucky material.

Camp Scholarships

Are you interested in helping to provide camp scholarships to those in need? Your donation to our Nature Camp Scholarship Fund gives families with limited resources the same opportunity to gain memorable experiences in the outdoors. Donations can be made online through GiveButter (<https://givebutter.com/GahaganNatureCamp>) or by getting in touch with us at info@gahagannature.org

A Resource for Our Community

Unlocking Possibilities to Enhance Environmental Education

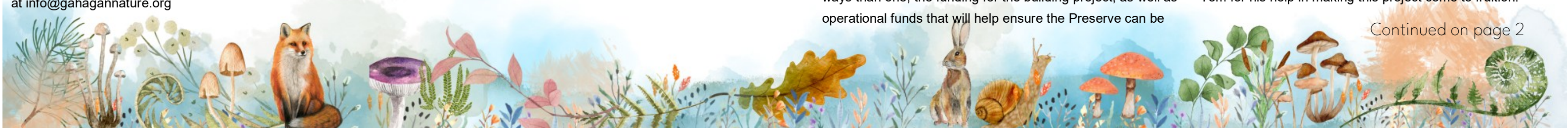
Winter has been an exciting time to watch progress unfold at the Gahagan Nature Preserve. In November of last year we broke ground on the construction of an addition to Marguerite's cabin – a 2,240 square foot space with an exhibits and program area, additional restrooms which will be open year-round for visitors, and a separate activities room. As of the time of this writing the building is taking shape with the walls up, roof framed, and internal workings getting set into place. By the time this newsletter is mailed to your home, we'll have even more progress to be excited about. We expect the construction of the addition to be completed this spring, and ready for use for our summer activities.

This project has been made possible through the generous donation of Gahagan volunteer, Larry Dashner. Larry's contribution to the Preserve has helped us to grow in more ways than one; the funding for the building project, as well as operational funds that will help ensure the Preserve can be

staffed and maintained for years to come. The Gahagan Nature Preserve has been a volunteer-driven effort from the beginning, we are grateful to Larry for sharing his time and talents during his lifetime, as well as his substantial gift to continue his legacy of stewardship and care for this special place.

We have other volunteers to thank for this project, as things of this nature always take a team of dedicated individuals. A special thanks to the members of our board of directors for your careful and considered planning efforts over the years. We also want to extend our gratitude to Gahagan volunteer, Tom Barber. Tom has contributed his knowledge and experience in the building industry to shepherd us from the planning and dreaming stages of this project to the realities of getting it accomplished. We are very grateful for Tom for his help in making this project come to fruition.

Continued on page 2



A Resource for Our Community - Continued from page 1

This expansion represents more than just a building; it offers an exciting array of opportunities for hands-on learning, interactive exhibits, and growing the programming and events we can offer for our community. Even after the construction is completed; we aren't done yet. We need your help to bring our new space to life – whether that is through financial support to help us purchase tables, chairs, and educational signage; becoming a volunteer as we grow our offerings; spreading the word about our organization; or by simply showing up to events. As we carry on our work here at Gahagan, we warmly invite you to continue playing a vital role in shaping the future growth and stewardship of our community's nature preserve. The possibilities becoming available to our organization are immense and exciting, we hope you will join us in helping to make these a reality.



How you can help:

Donate: We are in need of funds for the next phase of our project; to furnish the building for our expanded events, and ultimately to purchase educational signage and interactive nature displays for visitors. Our goal is to create a premier destination for environmental education in our area. Donations can be made through our GiveButter donation platform: <https://givebutter.com/SupportGahagan> or via our mailing address. Online donations can be made as a one-time gift, or a reoccurring monthly contribution.

Volunteer: We would love for you to share your time and talents with Gahagan. Whether it is education, trail work, administration, or something else – there is a role for you! If you are interested in getting involved as a volunteer, please fill out our online interest form: <https://www.gahagannature.org/volunteer>.

Spread the word: Follow us on social media, share our paper newsletter with a friend, sign up for email updates; word of mouth is one of the most powerful tools we can use to share the happenings at Gahagan – please share your favorite parts of this special place with your loved ones.

Attend an event: Check our calendar regularly for new events and happenings at the Preserve, let us know you're coming by RSVPing on our website: www.gahagannature.org/calendar.

Forest School is coming to the Gahagan Nature Preserve!

A group of parents affiliated with The Sundrop School, a nature-based Montessori school for 3-6 year olds in Roscommon, is forming a Forest Elementary program for ages 6-9 at the Gahagan Nature Preserve for the 2025/26 school year. The mission of this program is to provide a robust, educationally rich, mixed-age learning environment for first through third graders, which immerses them in hands-on, project-based learning in nature. Children in this program will spend at least 2 hours (and up to the full day) outdoors on the Preserve each day, utilizing low to no screen-based technology. It will provide learners with experiential education in all the core subjects, while fostering their relationship with the natural world and cultivating their role as stewards of the earth. In addition to a full day elementary program, there will likely be a half-day (afternoons only) program, depending on enrollment and interest. If you would like to learn more about this program, are interested in enrolling, or would like to join the teaching team, please email info@sundropmontessori.com.



Come Join Us at the Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve!

The Gahagan Nature Preserve operates as a non-profit organization run by volunteers and funded by its members, donors and the endowment left by Marguerite. Your generous contributions play a vital role in preserving this rich and diverse habitat, allowing us to expand the areas we protect, providing a beautiful recreational space in the Roscommon area, and supporting our educational programs for the community. Please join us and help keep the Preserve and its programs moving forward.

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

Members (up to \$30) Supporters (\$31-\$249) Partners (\$250-\$499) Stewards (\$500-\$999) Patrons (\$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 •
Thank you for your support!
You can also donate, join or renew your membership online at www.givebutter.com/SupportGahagan

Did you know? You can make a Big Impact by Becoming a Monthly Donor!

Becoming a monthly donor for the Gahagan Nature Preserve is a simple yet powerful way to amplify your impact at the Preserve and in our community. By committing to a regular contribution, you help us to better plan for the future and allocate resources effectively to support our programs and improvements at the Preserve.

When you choose to donate to the Gahagan Nature Preserve, your contribution becomes a powerful force for protecting and sharing this natural place. Because of our small size, every dollar donated has an immense impact on our ability to carry out our mission of protecting habitat and providing hands-on environmental learning.

It only takes a few minutes to set up your monthly donation through our secure online platform, and you can choose an amount that fits your budget. You can also take care of membership dues via monthly giving. Donors will receive receipts for tax purposes after the end of the calendar year.

Thank you for supporting Your Preserve!



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(989) 275-3217
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www.GahaganNature.org



Thank you RCCF!

Improvements made possible by the Roscommon County Community Foundation



Coming Soon: New Trail Maps

Updated signs and trail markers are coming soon to all of our trails here at Gahagan! Many of our signs and posts are in much need of replacement. Thanks to the Roscommon County General Fund, the Weede Family Community Recreation Fund and the Roscommon County Recreation Fund through RCCF we are able to replace these with new, durable materials. **Please note some changes to our trail colors when you arrive for your next hike!** We plan to have signs posted after our Spring Clean-Up Day on April 26th (weather permitting).

New Bridge to Brookside

For 25 years the entrance into the Gahagan Nature Preserve from Brookside subdivision was restricted to a narrow easement. The purchase of two acres adjacent to the subdivision has allowed the Preserve to reroute the trail and construct a long lasting, safe bridge to cross Tank Creek. The bridge deck was constructed in the fall and the railing was installed over the winter. Gahagan is grateful to the Roscommon County Community Foundation for the support from the Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve General Fund to assist in purchasing the materials for construction of the new bridge.



Special thanks to Don James, Ken Elmore and Julie Crick for your work with bridge construction!

Spring Upcoming Events

All events and registration information can be found at: www.gahagannature.org/calendar. Please register in advance.

- April 26: **Spring Clean Up** 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- May 10: **World Migratory Bird Day**, 10:30 a.m.-Noon
- May 28: **Sounds of Spring: Frog Calls of the Northwoods**, 6-7 p.m.
- June 6: **Hummingbird Banding Demonstration**, 9-11 a.m.
- June 6: **Kirtland's Warbler Festival Home Opener** Start time 5 p.m.

Friends of the Gahagan Nature Preserve

Thank you to our 2024-2025 Donors!

The following gifts were received between March 16, 2024 and March 18, 2025

Patrons (\$1,000 and up)

Cliff and Carolyn Colwell
John and Betty Colwell
Brian and Mary Hutchins
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Kathy VanderMolen and Gary Harms
Roberta Werle
Calla Werle and Douglas Turrill
Karrie and Gabe Williams,
Northern Family Dentistry
Robert Williams
Tom and Joyce Zeneberg
Kirtland Garden Club

Memorials and Honoraria

In memory of Gary Boushelle
Sharon Boushelle
In memory of Toni Seton
Richard Seton
In memory of Helen F. (Murphy) Proctor
Mary Alice McKindles
In memory of Richard Clapp
Martha Clapp
In memory of Edward and Anita Lamberg
Rhonda Lamberg
In memory of Joyce McConnell
Steve and Judy McEnaney
In memory of Robert and Julia Borak
Linda Mesler
In memory of Verna Maechissus LaBarre
Don and Suzanne Pennell
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Roberta Werle
In memory of Joyce Hartig McConnell
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In memory of Jim Mason
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Sue and Carl Jock
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Yvonne Hartig

Environmental Learning for the Future Program Supporters

Weyerhaeuser
Mary Alice McKindles

Thank you all for your Support



Birds of the Gahagan Nature Preserve

Ovenbirds (*Seiurus aurocapilla*)

By Mike Petrucha

Ovenbirds (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) are one of the most common breeding birds found at Gahagan. It is chunky for a warbler with bold, black spots on a white breast forming streaks and a white eye ring. The back is olive green, and the crown has orange and black stripes and both sexes look alike. Ovenbirds are heard more often than seen with a loud song described as “teacher, teacher, teacher”. Robert Frost wrote a poem about the bird “The Oven Bird”.

Ovenbirds breed in mature broadleaf or mixed upland closed-canopy forests, the larger the better, with little underbrush and plenty of leaf-litter from the Mid-Atlantic states to northeastern British Columbia. They eat insects, primarily adult beetles and larvae, ants, caterpillars, and flies found in leaf litter, walking like miniature chickens. Their nestlings are fed beetles and larvae. The female Ovenbird builds a nest in thick leaf litter on the open forest selecting a spot under or near a small break in the canopy, often near where a tree has fallen or near regrowth from some other disturbance. She builds a domed nest with dead leaves, grass, bark, twigs; lines it with animal hair. The outside of the nest looks like an old-fashioned outdoor bread over, giving the bird their name. The female lays



4-5 white eggs with reddish-brown spots and speckles. She sits on the eggs for about 2 weeks before they hatch. The male does not incubate but occasionally brings his mate food. The young stay in the nest for 7-10 days and are fed by both parents. After leaving the nest, the fledglings are split up by the parents. The male keeps his young within the territory, and the female leads hers to a nearby area. The young become independent about a month after hatching.

Ovenbirds migrate with storm fronts on their spring and fall migration routes. Large numbers are sometimes killed as they collide with towers and tall buildings along the paths of these fronts. They arrive in Michigan from early to mid-May. In the fall, Ovenbirds head south from late August to early October, with the adults leaving before the young. Ovenbirds winter in Florida, the Caribbean, Central America, and the northern tip of South America in areas with mature forests, shade coffee trees or mangroves, on dry scrubland, and in moist upland or dry lowland forests that have leaf litter for hunting invertebrates. Those that nest east of the Appalachian Mountains tend to winter in Florida and the Caribbean and those that nest to the west winter in Central and South America.

June Bird Count

Come join us Saturday June 14, 2025, for the 15th Gahagan June Bird Count. 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. We are usually done by 10:00 am. If you would like to participate, or just tag along for some outdoor fun, go to www.gahagannature.org/calendar. In 2024 we counted 125 individuals of 35 species in two hours. The past counts can be seen on eBird, by going to: www.ebird.org. Click on the “Explore” tab, then click on “Explore Hotspots,” then type in “Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve.”

Kirtland's Warbler Weekend June 6-7

By Mike Petrucha, Kirtland's Warbler Festival Chair

Friday at the Gahagan Nature Preserve

Join us from 9–11am for a very special **Hummingbird Banding Demonstration** with Allen Chartier!

If you are not a morning person, you can kick off the weekend with the Friday Night Home Opener starting at 5pm. Join us for Wine and Beer tastings, appetizers, and a scavenger hunt (5-7pm).

At 7pm our keynote speaker, Allen Chartier, will present *Hummingbirds of the Great Lakes*. Allen has been interested in science and nature since he was 5 and birdwatching since age 11. Since 1979, he and his wife have been on birding trips to 28 countries and all 50 U.S. states. He has been a bird bander since 1997 and a hummingbird bander since 2000, creating the Great Lakes HummerNet research project. After the presentation, stay for a Live Art Auction at 8pm for an original Kirtland's Warbler painting by featured artist Carlotta Brandenburg of Whistling Cat Studio.



Saturday in Downtown Roscommon

Start the festival with a guided tour from **7:30-9:30am** or **10am-noon**.

Tours leave from the CRAF Center

Registration table opens at 7am.

The rest of the festival activities will take place from **10am-4pm** featuring:

Children's activities under the **Kid's Tent**, the Forest Service's **Young Artists' Contest** artwork display, door prize drawings, art by **Featured Artist—Carlotta Brandenburg**, and educational presentations. Browse the wares of the vendors, ask questions from the various natural resource agencies, and be entertained with live music.

Don't miss the **Kirtland's Warbler Migration Game** hosted by Bill Rapai of the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance at 11:30am and 1:30pm. Also back this year is the **Children's Entrepreneur Market** from noon-3pm. Stay until 3pm to hear the **Birdhouse Artist Contest** winner announced and 3:15 pm for the **Kowa Binocular drawing!**

Featured Presenters



12:30pm–1:20pm
Dr. Steve Roels,
American Bird
Conservancy

Kirtland's Culture:

Celebrating the Bird through Fine Art and Everyday Objects



1:30pm–2:30pm
Kathleen Hansen
Exploring Motus:
Mapping
Kirtland's Warbler
Migrations



2:40pm–3:40pm
Jim McGrath, Nature
Discovery
Beyond the Kirtland's
Warbler: Birds of the
Jack Pines

For more info and the full schedule of events visit the Kirtland's Warbler Festival Facebook page or email kirtlandsfestival@gmail.com.

