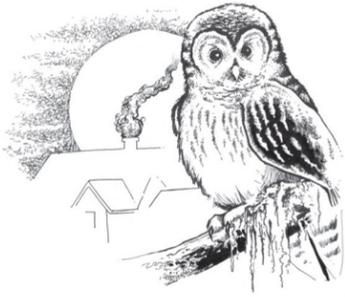


Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve

P.O. Box 421

Roscommon, MI 48653



Gahagan Open House/General Membership Meeting

Sunday, October 15, 2017 1-4 PM



The storm built up.

It rumbled a warning as dusk came and evening closed in on the woods at 9 p.m. The storm warned the little people. It was near midnight before it broke in awesome majesty. The frogs hailed its coming, croaking loudly as lightning streaked in the west, as the breeze mounted to a wind, a wind that came in a great rush, bending the trees, tossing silver clouds of rain, and the thunder, once rumbling, crashed and the black sky was ablaze with lightning.

The lightning came in waves, not jagged streaks, and with its coming it held the storm-tossed woods in blue-white splendor. It was a moment in which to forget the world of man and contemplate the world as it was made.

I pulled the paper from the typewriter, turned out the cabin lights and sat in front of the picture window to see the woods in the storm-torn night. Rain came, came in a torrent, pouring in a rushing spray from the valley where the cabin roof joins the porch. The waterspout gleamed like silver in the lightning, and water from the roof hung in the air like silver sparklets, like silver fish swimming, and a firefly blinked with rhythmic music against the glass as the storm sang its own song over the woods that night. There was music in the woods, music and blinding silver beauty as the trees bent, danced, sang in the wind and blazing light of the storm.

Life goes on. Life goes on in the woods in an unchanging pattern.



Marguerite Gahagan ~ June 27, 1962



Newsletter of Gahagan Nature Preserve, Inc.

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

Issue #33 ~ Fall 2017

You are cordially invited to our 20th Anniversary
Open House and Membership Meeting
on Sunday, October 15, 2017 from 1:00 to 4:00 PM

Twenty years. Wow. Ten acres to sixty. A vandalized cabin to a refurbished instructional facility. Barely traceable foot paths to maintained hiking trails. Equipment under a tarp to an electrified storage garage. Benches. A parking lot. A paved pathway. The Visiting Naturalist. Project ELF. Field trips. Nature Camp. Volunteers. Donors. Contributors. Challengers. Grantors. Boy Scouts. School children. Sammy the snake. Critters. The Gazebo. The Pond. The outdoor restroom. The Kiosk. Boardwalks. Interpretive signage. Trail markers. Friendships. Relationships. Partners. People. You.

On Sunday, October 15th, from 1-4 PM Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve will celebrate its 20th Anniversary with a Wine Tasting Open House. Selections from Fifth Street Wines will be available and Naturalist Jalen William returns with a Naturetime presentation. Snacks, hiking, learning and fellowship are all included.

"If you build it....." Much has been accomplished. Many have helped.

Please come join in celebrating our collective accomplishments.

**Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve
Board of Directors ~ 2017-2018**

Chairperson: Tom Dale
Vice Chair: Troy Fairbanks
Secretary: Bobbie Werle
Julie Crick
Ken Elmore
Sue Huffman
Brian Hutchins
Jalen Williams

Beth Zuker, Education Director
(989) 275-3217 ~ info@GahaganNature.org

Tracy Bosworth, Executive Director
(989) 390-0903 ~ adm@GahaganNature.org

www.GahaganNature.org

Gahagan Calendar

2017 Events

Sept.-May: ELF program in local schools
Sept. 5: Fall field trips begin
Sept. 13: Resurfacing Paved Trail
Sept. 14: Family Night @ Fireman's Memorial
Oct. 15: Open house at Gahagan 1-4PM
Dec 2: Christmas in the Village @CRAF Center

2018 Events

Jan-April: The "Visiting Naturalist" program
April 21: Spring clean-up (9 AM-Noon)
April 23: Spring field trips begin
July 17-19: Nature Camp

Board of Directors meet on the 2nd Monday of the month, 7 PM. All are welcome to attend.

For up-to-date schedule changes and event details, visit www.GahaganNature.org

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. Did you know that it provides environmental education for many of the schools in the surrounding counties? Did you know that the 60-acre preserve is open to the public for hiking, snowshoeing, birding and many other uses? Did you know we have an asphalt and boardwalk trail that is wheelchair friendly? It travels through woods and wetlands and along the beginnings of Tank Creek. Interested in learning and helping? Please join us!

Yes, I/we want to join Marguerite Gahagan Nature preserve. Enclosed is my/our yearly membership.

\$20 Individual / \$30 Family / \$50 Organizational \$_____ Donation

I am making a donation of \$_____ in memory of, in honor of _____

Name: _____ Ph: (____) _____

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

E-Mail Address: _____@_____

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

You can also donate, join, or renew your membership on-line at www.GahaganNature.org

YUP, WE CONTINUE TO ASK FOR YOUR SUPPORT. WE STILL NEED YOU!

September is when we request that you renew your individual or family memberships. Individual memberships are set at \$20 per year. Family memberships are \$30 per year. You can easily log on to www.GahaganNature.org to take care of your dues or make a donation through the secure PayPal link. Membership dues are a major source of revenue for our organization. As you read about Gahagan's educational programs and our struggle to continue making these available to the community, know that your dues are supporting this endeavor. They also directly contribute to improvements to the preserve's grounds. We ask that join us and help to ensure that our community and schools will always have access to this wonderful natural place. From all of us at Gahagan, "Thank you!"

Welcome Colwell Family

"Our whole family much appreciated the morning we spent at Gahagan Nature Preserve with Tracy, Tom, and Beth. Thank you from all of us for organizing that time and to each one for making it so special. We learned a lot from your introduction, the hike, and the slide show and are pleased to be able to see how successfully the education program is moving forward. It is such a privilege to be able to share with you the goal of exposing our young people to the excitement, beauty, and fragility of our natural environment, and especially pleasing to see this happening in one of our favorite locations—Higgins Lake/Roscommon, Michigan. Cliff and I will be back in the fall and look forward to hiking at Gahagan during that beautiful time of year."

~Carolyn Colwell



The weather may have been damp and drizzle-filled on July 26th, but our spirits were bright when fourteen members of the Colwell Family visited the preserve.

The funds raised through donations to the "Colwell Challenge" between January and March of 2017 enabled Gahagan Nature to offer the 2017 Visiting Naturalist Program as well as 2017 Spring and Fall Field Trips to area schools free of charge. Thanks to all who contributed!

**Membership August 1, 2016
through July 31, 2017**

Bob Andrus
Hazel Babcock
John & Jeanie Bennick
Theresa Blamer
Greg and Linda Bodker
Mark & Tracy Bosworth
Greg and Linda Bodker
Ann & RJ Bolzman
Bob & Julie Borak
Jack & Joanne Bouck
Sherwood Boudeman
Julie Boushelle
Gary & Sharon Boushelle
Mark Burger
William Burrows
Brian & Janet Carson
Pat & Karen Casady
Cliff & Caroline Colwell
Chris & Jane Colwell
John & Betty Colwell
Matthew & Jill Colwell
Julie Crick
Phyllis & Tom Dale
Larry Dashner
Dan Dawson
Karen Demers

Kenda & Kevin Denlinger
Dave & Penny Diltz
Stan & Patti Dombrowski
Lynn Donaldson
Dale & Theresa Ekdorn
Ken Elmore
Fairbanks/Martindale Family
Roger & Mary Fechner
Caryl & Ed Fischer
Jim & Carol Garlo
Mike & Sue Glover
Don & Elaine Granzine
Jack Hipchen
Susan Huffman
Brian & Mary Hutchins
Nadyne Hunt
Connie Colwell Jabari
Carl & Sue Jock
Jerry & Joyce Johnston
Mike Kent
Art & Kathy Kettlehut
Anne & Russell Kidd
Kirtland Garden Club
Tom & Elisabeth Kish
Rich & Cathy Koupal
Gwen Krupp
Duncan & Kathy Lawrence
Leona Martin
Mitchell/McCarthy Family
Patti & Tom Moreau
JoAnn & Mike Muston

Doug & Ginny Nagel
Jack & Susan Nanry
Terry Nanry
Theresa O'Brien
Carl Peters
Mike Petrucha
Bruce & Betty Phillips
Stewart Powrie
Deb & John Rosczyk
Ralph & Nancy Rucinski
Bill & Patti Sarkella
Christine Schicker
Al Schultz
Peggy & Mark Scott
Richard Seton
Rich & Carol Silverman
Jay & Lorrene Spaulding
Vicki & Pat Springstead
Lisa & Dan Sutton
Anna & Don Sylvester
Betty Thomas
Pam & Jim Tucker
Gary Harms & Kathy Vander Mollen
John & Liz Wade
Kathy & Mike Wahl
Eleanor Washburn
Jerry & Darlene Weinrich
Jerry & Bobbie Werle
Robert & Clarice Williams
Jalen Williams
Susan Worden

The Herbarium By Tom Dale

When I began teaching biology and chemistry at Kirtland Community College in January 1973, the highest enrollment program was Natural Resources Technology. Students came from all over the country to participate in a program that offered courses in parks and recreation, wildlife biology, fisheries management, conservation law, soil science and forestry and the opportunity to finish a two-year degree or transfer to a four-year colleges and have access to an interesting career. The science courses that I taught were primarily in support of that program. One of my very favorites courses was botany, the scientific study of plants. For most of the next 40 years, a collection of local specimens accumulated. That growing collection necessitated a storage facility and eventually a herbarium cabinet was built to house it.

A steadfast hallmark of community colleges here and throughout the country is change and in 1982, that happened at Kirtland and in a big way. The natural resources program came to an end as the registered nursing program began. Many of my favorite courses and botany in particular lost much of their enrollment and were relegated to alternate year offerings. Courses that supported health occupations grew to dominate my course load. At the same time a summer course, nature study, gained popularity and grew in enrollment. Many area teachers took nature study to gain resources for use in their own classrooms. Plant studies are a very important part of nature study and as such, added to the growing herbarium collection.

In 2015, the winds of change came again to Kirtland as a major shift to even more health occupation programs came to dominate the curriculum. In support of the growing focus on health sciences, the college expanded to a whole new campus on Four Mile Road south of Grayling. In this process of change, many science classes including both botany and nature study were dropped from the curriculum as the science department moved to the new facility. To shorten an otherwise much longer story; Gahagan Nature Preserve recently acquired that herbarium. Brian Hutchins and I spent a few hours one morning in March boxing up the collection of plant specimens and a few days later the college maintenance department moved the cabinet to the preserve.

The herbarium collection of several thousand specimens and the storage cabinet are sitting in the garage at the preserve. I look forward to putting it all back together. Many specimens in the collection are not well prepared and some are not properly identified, but most are very well done and accurately identified and bear the name of the student scientist who prepared them. The collection is likely to grow as time goes by and will serve both as a reference collection and as a valuable teaching tool. One thing is for certain, Gahagan Nature Preserve will be here for a very long time and our mission to provide authentic environmental education will continue.



The ELF (Environmental Learning for the Future) program depends on its volunteers to succeed. If you are a parent, grandparent, or community member that would like to participate in the 2017-2018 ELF program in Roscommon or Houghton Lake, please do not hesitate to contact us! It is an excellent chance to interact with students in the classroom, and requires a very minimal time commitment (~2 hours/month). Please Contact Education Director Beth Zuker at info@GahagnNature.com or call (989) 275-3217 and volunteer today!

2017-2018 ELF Schedule

Roscommon Elementary and Middle: "Habitats"

Kits: Life in a Field, Forest Floor, Rotting Logs, Animals in Winter, Snug in the Snow, White-Tailed Deer, Streams, Ponds

St. Joseph Catholic School: "Adaptations"

Kits: Insect Lives, Meet a Tree, Seed Dispersal, Fly Away or Stay, Galls, Winter Twigs, Bird Songs, Inside a Flower, Dandelions

Our Lady of the Lake & Collins: "Designs of Nature"

Kits: Spiders and Webs, Variations on a Leaf, Cones, Snow and More, Tracks and Traces, Winter Weeds, Camouflage, Honeybees

Visiting Naturalist

Be on the look out for large cats, as the Visiting Naturalist brings "Cat Tales" to the area. "Cat Tales" explores the seven species of wild cats that are native to North America. Consider booking the Visiting Naturalist for your organization. While designed for children, the program is easily tailored to audiences of all ages. It is an entertaining, informative, active presentation. We will be scheduling this 60 minute program for winter, 2018. If you would like to get on the schedule early, contact Beth.



Nature Camp 2017

Nature Camp provided lots of learning and fun for thirteen campers and three student volunteers, Ellie, Haley and Maddie, who were each assigned a group of campers to work with for the three days. Our theme this year was "Designs of Nature," which included a variety of topics, like spiders, tracks, and camouflage.

Day One started out with creating name tags from tree "cookies" and a get to know you activity, followed by a scavenger hunt and an introduction to spiders. On our nature walk, students collected a variety of plants, which were later pressed for t-shirts.

Day Two began with a dilemma: how do scientists categorize plants? Students worked in groups to create their own system of classifying leaves based upon patterns. Assigned a specific habitat, campers worked to create a "camo critter." Then they had even more fun, as the critters were hidden outside and they had to try to find all of them.



Froggin' is a Nature Camp institution

Day Three arrived way too quickly. It was all about tracks and how they create a story. Outside, students got real creative as they laid a trail, which another group had to then follow. Using the pressed plants from Day One, students then designed their own t-shirts. This was followed by a long-standing tradition of frogging! Even though the students didn't net many frogs this year, they certainly didn't lack in enthusiasm.

Summer camp ended with Family Night at the cabin. Ellie Harms, our camp photographer, put together a nice power point which she shared with the participants. Mr. Dale talked about the world of insects and displayed part of his trilobite collection. The evening ended with a visit from Sammy the snake, and Tom's yummy no-bake cookies.

FALL FIELD TRIPS 2017

Field Trip season starts September 5 and runs through October 31. Programs are grade-level specific based on NexGen Science Standards or can be tailored to meet the needs of individual classes. Time slots are available for morning and afternoon, 90-minute programs. Due to generous contributions from individual donors, our community sponsors and the Colwell contributors this past year, all 2017 field trips are provided to schools at no cost. Sixteen classrooms attended in the spring of this year, with over 400 children in attendance. Take advantage of this opportunity for your students to escape the classroom and experience nature first-hand. Contact Beth at: Info@GahaganNature.org or call (989) 275-3217

Gahagan gratefully acknowledges the support from our Community Sponsors in 2017

The Brook Retirement Community
Carey & Jaskowski PLLC
Fick and Sons
Hart Ford Lincoln
Higgins Lake Foundation
Navigator Wireline Services
Nester Automotive
Northern Family Dentistry
Performance Propane
Roscommon Auto Recyclers
Roscommon County Community Foundation
Roscommon Teachers Association
Woodland Family Dentistry

Summertime Work Days

Over the course of a few years or so, we are confronted with an excessive amount of brush and debris that needs attention. Enter our friends at Second Chance Academy. On a sunny June day, a class of teenagers and their teachers spent the entire school day cleaning up our huge, brushy mess. They even took care of a problem brush pile that had accumulated for years just inside our parking lot gate. Now that clearly would have been a great contribution to our preserve, but there is more. A week later, they came over again and with wheel barrow, shovels and rakes proceeded to spread wood chips on the green trail. Come on out and check out the great work our friends accomplished for us.



You Look Marvelous!

After a thorough power washing and 45 gallons of stain, all three buildings on the preserve are looking fantastic. Dave Cokewell and crew spent nearly two weeks working on the buildings at the Gahagan. It was a tall order and one that the board knew we would need help with. We are delighted the buildings and entrance ramps are properly protected for years to come.



Consider This:

In Michigan, you must have a permit to burn during periods when there is no snow cover. Burning regulations and permits are available through Michigan.gov/burnpermit or calling 866.922.BURN. Burning is restricted in and near all villages and municipalities and by many local governments. As an example, Gerrish Township bans burning except when there is snow on the ground. Composting is a safer, more environmentally friendly alternative. Many governments now have compost sites for this reason.

Preservation and Prevention

By Ken Elmore

Well we've reached the end of yet another summer season. I don't know anyone who hasn't been scratching their head saying "Where did it go?" As seasons change, so do the various concerns of what challenges may be forthcoming. At Gahagan, the biggest challenge regardless of season is simply preserving the preserve. While we've weathered difficult storms that wreaked havoc, storms are one of several conditions we must deal with no control over the outcome. Another potentially disastrous condition to all of us is the threat of damage and destruction due to fire. This, luckily in most cases, can be prevented by some safe practices that we should all adhere to regardless of where we are at, or the time of year.

Many wildland fires can be traced back to several causes that could have been easily avoided by folks paying attention to a few basics in fire safety. Knowing your own environment is a good place to start. Sounds pretty simple, but it is surprising how many of us pay little attention to our surroundings and how they can affect things on a broader scale. Burning the leaves or brush on our properties is very common in the fall and spring seasons, so if you choose to do so, make sure you have a designated area to burn. This means making sure that the ground underneath has been raked or cleared of any combustible materials. Clear it out to a diameter that will not allow burning material to begin to creep along the ground out from your burn area and get away from your control.

By all means, make sure that your fire is attended to constantly. Even a few moments to run into the house for something can spell disaster, so before you start, make sure you are ready to monitor at all times. Have at your disposal some means to extinguish your fire, be it a garden hose or water bucket. Have patience. Don't try to burn everything all at once. The hotter and larger the fire source, the farther the potential travel distance of smoldering debris. Always be aware that smoldering embers may exist for several days after even though the fire "looks like it's out." Properly douse the fire area when you've finished. Pay attention to the official burn conditions put out by authorities. They post them on line or by sign to keep you and the environment safe by monitoring daily weather conditions. It could be that you may have to postpone your burn plans altogether for a time. While no one will be going into the Preserve to burn brush, we all live in surrounding areas that can be impacted by a wildfire gone awry. Keep those simple tips in mind and tell friends, family and neighbors to do the same. Let's keep anything from the outside from advancing into Gahagan. There is no replacement for awareness, common sense, patience and safe practice in the ever continuing effort to keep all our special places safe.

Blustery Times by Julie Crick

A few times a year, some part of Michigan experiences straight line winds that knock down trees in its path. On Thursday, July 6th in the late afternoon, the Village of Roscommon received a burst of high winds that knocked down tens, if not hundreds, of trees in both the urban and natural forests. The storm seemed to do the most damage in the south and east portions of the Village of Roscommon, including within the Gahagan Nature Preserve.

Board member Brian Hutchins was the first person to report on the scene, beginning his email with, "Good news is that the boardwalks and buildings survived." Good news, indeed, some people with trees affected by the wind were not so lucky. Although no one was hurt in the storm, plenty of buildings were damaged. The email went on to report about the 16 different areas in the Gahagan Preserve with trees down, four areas included several trees that came down in a cluster making the trail impassable. It was clear from the description that a lot of work needed to be done.



Over the next four weeks, dedicated board members worked with chainsaw, gloves and grit to cut and move the trees from the designated trails. A couple of times it was deemed wiser and safer to 'shift' the trail rather than clear the jackstraw of debris. We'll call it, 'habitat additions,' because that is exactly what it is.

The disturbance to the Gahagan forest can actually be a good thing for the forest ecosystem. Healthy forest ecosystems typically include a mosaic, or patchwork, of trees that are of different ages. A mosaic forested landscape can host a greater variety of tree species as well as provide habitat for a greater variety of wildlife. Traditionally, forest mosaics were created by natural disturbances including wind, fire or flood.

Disturbance creates openings in the forests that allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor, giving plants, trees and wildlife a boost. The plants that grow in response to the sunlight provide food to all kinds of wildlife ranging from the mice that eat the seeds to the deer that may eat the plant itself. Not to mention the fox that eats the mice. Trees that find themselves suddenly blessed with increased sunlight can grow quickly into the space, competing with trees around the opening that will also use the opportunity to extend branches into the newly created sunspot. Wildlife can benefit not only from the increased opportunity for food, but also from the increased structure provided by the branches of the smaller trees and shrubs growing into the space.

Structure refers to the vertical arrangement of trees and shrubs growing in a forest, and affects nesting, roosting and hunting habitat of birds and small mammals. Increased structure, which can be created by an increase in the number of medium sized trees and shrubs under tall trees, can provide more opportunities for birds to build nests or perch safely in the branches. The abundance of branches means that predators like hawks and owls have a harder time hunting through the increased cover. Small mammals living on the forest floor are a bit safer when nesting or resting under thickets for the same reason. Birds that feed on insects found on the leaves or along the branches will have more hunting opportunities; while birds that catch and eat insects as they fly through the air will have fewer hunting opportunities and may have to relocate as a result.

It's all about perspective....

Barring injury to people or structures, how you view wind events in the forest like the one on July 6th is all about perspective. Is it an unsightly mess of tangled branches? Or a habitat opportunity? You decide.

