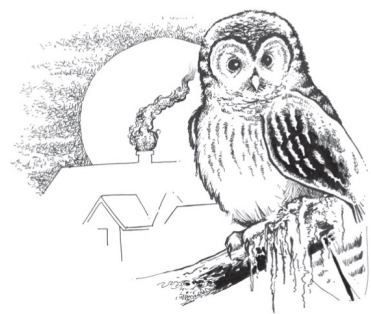


Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve
PO Box 421
Roscommon, MI 48653



Fall OPEN HOUSE and Bread Contest!

Sunday, Oct. 15, 2023
Join us!

Gahagan Nature Preserve Open House

Annual Membership Meeting

Best Bread Bake Off!

Sunday, Oct. 15, 2023

1-3 p.m. at the Cabin

*Come to the Preserve for our annual Open House and
Membership Meeting - stay for the Bread Contest!*

Starting at 1 p.m., the Open House is a chance to meet the board, walk the trails, have some refreshments and see what all the buzz is about!

Get outside for a nature-themed activity at 2 p.m., followed by our annual membership meeting.

The Best Bread Bake Off begins at 1:30 p.m. To enter, submit two loaves of your entry in either the Sweet or Savory category (or both!). Tasting will last as long as the bread does.

One vote per attendee.

We hope to see you!!

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Newsletter of Gahagan Nature Preserve, Inc.

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

Issue #45 • Fall 2023

Campers give homes to 'Gahagan Critters'

By Kalsa Parker Browning

July 25-27 saw the return of summer Nature Camp at the Preserve, with 15 young nature enthusiasts participating in nature-themed games, crafts and plenty of hiking in the woods.

We started Nature Camp with some get-to-know-you name games and created our tree cookie nametags. Then, we started preparations for one of our featured activities – creating nature-inspired T-shirt designs. The first step was to gather plants for pressing which would be used to decorate shirts toward the end of camp (using a bleach and water mixture to change the color around the plants). The final result included some great designs, and a camp memento the kids could take home.

Not all of our days had themes, but Wednesday was all about **decomposers** – the very important critters that help break down materials and return them to the earth. Campers went on a hunt to find these various decomposers during our Decomposer Bingo activity, then used their senses to investigate the forest floor through sight, smell, touch, and hearing. We used our sense of taste during our themed snack – making Dirt n' Worm cups – with delicious Oreo dirt, graham cracker sand, gummy worms, and other tasty “decomposers.”

One daily activity that was a camp hit was building nature homes for “legendary” Gahagan critters. We

learned about what a legend is, and how these stories help explain the world around us.

Then campers were charged with creating a home for their very own legendary critter – complete with food, water and shelter – components of habitat that we all need to survive. On our last day, campers created a critter to live in their nature-home.

These homes are still on display along the Preserve’s trails (off of the paved trail near the cabin) where you can view the myriad of fairies and other leg-

endary critters that now inhabit Gahagan.

We wrapped up Nature Camp by talking about our favorite parts – with some heartwarming responses like “making new friends” and “everything.” We think this year’s camp was a hit. We look forward to welcoming new and returning campers for summer 2024!

A big thanks to our volunteers who helped make Nature Camp possible: Kami Boik, Tracy Bosworth, Tom Dale, Karen Demers and Sue Huffman.



Above, Tom Dale helps campers identify insects and other life pulled from the Preserve’s pond.

Left, camper Sam Jobson is pictured with his “Nature Home,” created during summer Nature Camp. Watch for these homes scattered along the trails at the Preserve—as well as the “Gahagan critters” that may inhabit them.

Don't miss our 3rd annual

Fall Firewise Offensive

Help us keep the Preserve open and accessible! We’re striving to reduce the fire hazard around the Preserve’s cabin by removing material that could sustain a wildfire.

Join us **Saturday, Oct. 7, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.**, to help drag downed brush and branches to be loaded into trailers and hauled next door to the Village Compost Site. **We’ll supply work gloves, water and lunch in return for a few hours of your light-duty labor!**



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



John and Betty Colwell recently took a moment to dust off the bench they sponsored several years ago, in memory of John's parents, Katharine and Clifford Colwell.

The bench is constructed of eco-friendly, maintenance-free 100% recycled plastic, with a brass commemorative plaque.

A fair number of memorial benches grace the trails at the Preserve. Come sit a while!

Memorials of all types welcomed at Preserve

We at Gahagan NP are always pleased to accept your donations in honor of birthdays, graduations, marriages, anniversaries and holidays as well as offerings in memory of loved ones.

The honoree or their family are notified of your gift, and we also send you an acknowledgment of the donation for your tax records.

The many memorial contributions

we've received over the years have helped to support the preserve's property and its mission to provide environmental education.

Gahagan has also been fortunate to receive several memorial benches over the years. Scattered throughout the trails, these benches provide respite to the weary traveler and help hikers to slow down and absorb the peaceful surroundings.

Memorializing someone with a bench or picnic table is a gift to countless visitors which will last through the years.

While we have not established a definitive policy, we would like to encourage some guidance as to safety, maintenance and durability of such physical gifts, as well as consistency.

We are happy to offer our suggestions and sources for material.

2023 Gahagan Events Calendar

- Sept. 14: **Getting Ready to Spot Neptune**, 6-7 p.m. at the Cabin. Learn how you can get ready for this astronomical event while participating in hands-on activities inspired by the cosmos!
- Sept. 16: **Bird-banding Demonstration**, 8-10 a.m. Don't miss this if you'd like to see live birds up close! Find out why we band birds and what it tells us about their lives and their habitat.
- Oct. 7: **3rd Annual Firewise Offensive**, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Help us lower the "fuel" load around the cabin with a little light-duty labor! Lunch provided.
- Oct. 15: **Fall Open House and Best Bread Bake Off!**, 1-3 p.m. at the Cabin. Everyone is welcome to participate!

Check our website or Facebook for current info and events.
Find us at www.gahagannature.org
Email to info@gahagannature.org

Bake bread!

Calling all bakers! Gahagan is hosting its first ever **Best Bread Bake Off** during our annual Open House, Sunday, Oct. 15, at the Preserve.

Enter either or both of two categories - **Savory** and **Sweet**.

You decide the flavor and we'll all decide the winners!

Enter by bringing two loaves of each flavor of bread you are entering. The Open House begins at 1 p.m. and bread sampling will commence at 1:30 p.m.

Winners will be determined by popular vote.



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

Gahagan Website has a new look

If you haven't checked it out recently, visit our website at www.gahagannature.org to see what's new, including a calendar feature with upcoming events. Stay up to date by visiting frequently and take advantage of upcoming programs with our online registration tools.



Prefer to go paperless?

Go to the "Contact Us" tab on the website and sign up for an electronic copy of our newsletter!

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 adm@GahaganNature.org or call 989-275-3217.

Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve Board of Directors

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

Kalsa Parker Browning, Education Director
(989) 275-3217 ~ info@GahaganNature.org

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

www.GahaganNature.org

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."

An idea takes shape - amphitheater in the woods

By Tom Dale

In my time as naturalist for the Gahagan Preserve, I have on several occasions been approached by some young lady and her mother, or maid of honor, or fiancée, wondering if they might have their wedding at the preserve. Always the answer was, sadly, the same; no suitable place exists here.

So I decided to find a way to remedy that. At our board of directors' June meeting I proposed, and the board agreed to, the idea of building an amphitheater in the pines as a place where outdoor programs of all sorts can be held.

The site I propose is near the cabin and surrounded by 10 cathedral pines. Its presentation area is 12x18 feet and level. The audience area is 50x44 feet and has a two-foot incline to the top. The area



Tom Dale give visitors to the Preserve a look at where he would like a memorial amphitheater to take shape.

will be terraced with three seven-inch steps. Great pains will be taken to blend it in with the surrounding beautiful forest.

From time to time we need to be reminded that Marguerite Gahagan's Nature Preserve is forever and that we are her stewards. And from time to time, persons happen along that impact our preserve in significant ways. The preserve is only 25 years old, but already some of those names are but fleeting memories. We can't let those memories fade away.

In the cabin will be a plaque commemorating the Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve Memorial Amphitheater and on it will be the names of persons who have gone before us and impacted our lives and our preserve; an accompanying journal will tell their stories.

fore us and impacted our lives and our preserve; an accompanying journal will tell their stories.

Remembering Jerry Weinrich

The Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve lost long-time supporter and member Jerry Weinrich on March 22, 2023.

Jerry was a Research/Wildlife Habitat biologist with the Michigan DNR for more than 30 years. Known as Mr. Kirtland's Warbler, Jerry was a giant in warbler recovery efforts. He also worked with numerous game and non-game species and was a staunch defender of wildlife conservation.

Jerry was an avid nature educator to people of all ages. Whether it was on Kirtland's warbler tours pointing out various plant and animal species, guiding participants on penguin tours in Antarctica, working with kids at nature camps, mentoring graduate students, demonstrating flintknapping, or at public meetings, Jerry's knowledge and advice benefitted those in attendance. The only thing he wouldn't share were his secret morel spots.

Whenever a need arose at Gahagan, such as a new roof for the cabin, Jerry and his wife Darlene could be counted on to donate to the cause. Jerry will be missed by everyone who knew him.



Photo by Carol Bocetti

Forestry topic of 4-H Camp

In mid-July, the Gahagan Nature Preserve became a forestry classroom for the young men attending the 4-H Forestry Camp. During Forestry Camp, participants learned all about forest ecology and the multitude of career options available in the forestry sector. At the Preserve, the participants learned how to identify and measure trees while taking note of changes in forest type, forest succession and the wildlife that call the preserve home.

Field trips were a highlight as we toured AJD Forest Products and the new Arauco facility, both near Grayling. There are certainly more than foresters that contribute to the success of the mills! We had a chance to see how it all works and talk to some of the people integral to the process.

The following day we switched gears and visited the young jack pine forest east of Roscommon to look for Kirtland's warbler with Gahagan Board Member and KW expert Mike Petrucha. The warbler didn't disappoint! We saw a female with fledglings within minutes of stopping. We also happened upon two researchers, Shyla Luna and Lauren Brunk, who were using radio antenna to track the location of Kirtland's warblers that were fitted with a transmitter earlier this year. We all listened in amazement to the "blips" that indicated a warbler was in the area; the frequency of the signal told Shyla and Lauren to which bird the "blip" belonged.

The camp culminated with a scavenger hunt during which the campers used a map to locate several marked trees. They then had to correctly identify and measure each tree. Most of the answers were correct! And it is our hope that the campers continue to expand on their forestry knowledge.

Special thanks to the Gahagan Nature Preserve Education Director Kalsa Parker Browning, for partnering with MSU Extension and 4-H to make the camp a success.

In Case You Missed It:

Some spring and summer program highlights from Gahagan

The community is catching on to new programming offered at the Preserve – this spring and summer we've had a full house at many of our events! Here are just a few of our favorite programs from this season:

Bird Activities Roundup

This spring and summer, Gahagan had several bird activities. The Owl Prowl in January was so popular that we held another on April 4. We had eight participants watch an owl presentation then went outside to brave the howling wind to listen for owls. Despite having a great horned owl calling right next to the parking lot the night before, the wind defeated us this night. Everyone still seemed to have a good time.

Bird banding demonstrations were held May 13 and June 2 by licensed Master Bander Mike Petrucha with 11 participants for our first event and eight at our second. No birds were caught in our nets on the May date, but two American robins and a black-capped chickadee were caught in June. The robins escaped during removal, but the chickadee was banded, allowing onlookers to see how the banding process works and what types of measurements can be taken for studies.

Various capture methods and the scientific reasons for banding birds were discussed. A young lad was allowed to release the chickadee. By the look on his face, I believe we created a nature lover. We will be hosting another bird-banding demonstration on Sept. 16 starting at 8 a.m. RSVP online at www.gahagannature.org/calendar.

A Kirtland's warbler tour was hosted on July 8 and attended by nine people. We had a couple periods of rain that shut down bird activity, but everyone did hear singing Kirtland's during periods when the rain stopped. An overview of the warbler's jack pine ecosystem was also discussed. Other birds seen or heard were sandhill crane, hermit thrush, red-eyed vireo, vesper sparrow, field sparrow, Eastern towhee, Nashville warbler, and common yellowthroat.

Check out highlights from our other bird-centered events – the June Bird Count and

the Kirtland's Warbler Fest Home Opener – in their respective featured articles.

Ferns, Clubmosses and Horsetails

Long-time Gahagan educator and board chair, Tom Dale, introduced our group of 11 participants to a special type of plants (non-flowering, vascular plants) during our Ferns, Clubmosses and Horsetails workshop on Tuesday, May 23. Once we had an understanding of what makes these plants a unique and interesting



Barrick and Michelle Fite, of Fite Family Music, presented a children's nature concert on July 25 at the Preserve.

group, participants departed the cabin and explored the Preserve to identify various types of ferns and see the several types of clubmosses and horsetails found on the grounds.

Children's Nature Concert

The Preserve was alive with the sound of music on July 25 at our first-ever Children's Nature Concert. We were happy to be joined by Michelle and Barrick Fite of Fite Family Music for nature-themed sing-alongs and interactive music.

This event was very popular and we were joined by more than 30 participants! The clouds enjoyed the music also and, toward the end of the concert, sent some rain showers to join us. The fun continued inside the cabin for the last few songs.

A huge thanks to Fite Family Music for joining us at the Preserve for this very special event.

Forestry Scavenger Hunt

Another great event this summer was our Forestry Scavenger Hunt, designed by board member Julie Crick. Thirteen participants gathered by the cabin for instructions on how to identify trees and got some hands-on experience using forestry tools to measure tree diameter and circumference. They were then let loose on the Preserve trails to test their new skills and hunt for various items along the way.

Sign-up for this event was very popular, so look for another offering in the future!



The pond and the creatures that inhabit it are always popular at events!

Looking Ahead:

Keep up to date on happenings at the Preserve by viewing our online calendar. RSVP for events at www.gahagannature.org/calendar.

Birds of Gahagan Nature Preserve American woodcock



American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*)
Photo courtesy Cornell University

By Mike Petrucha

American woodcocks, also known as timberdoodles, Labrador twisters, night partridge and bog suckers, are plump, short-legged shorebirds with very long, straight bills and wings that are broad and rounded compared to most other shorebirds.

They are well camouflaged in leaf litter with light brown, black, buff and gray-brown tones and buffy to almost orange underparts.

Woodcocks probe the soil with their bill to search for earthworms, using the flexible bill tip to capture prey. The bird walks slowly and sometimes rocks its body back and forth, stepping heavily with its front foot. This action may make worms move around in the soil, increasing their detectability. In addition to earthworms, they feed on other invertebrates they find in the soil, including snails, millipedes, spiders, flies, beetles and ants.

Unlike most other sandpipers, woodcocks nest in young, shrubby, deciduous forests, old fields and mixed forest-agricultural-urban areas across the Eastern United States and Southern Canada, arriving from mid-March to mid-April.

Males use forest openings and old fields in the springtime to display, which consists of buzzy peent calls from the ground, then flying upward in a wide spiral. As he gets higher, his wings start to twitter. At a height of 200–350 feet, the twittering becomes intermittent and the bird starts to descend. He zigzags down, chirping as he goes, then lands silently (near a female, if she is present). Once on the ground, he resumes peenting, and the display starts over again.

Males takes no part in caring for eggs or young. The nest, made by the female, is a scrape lined with dead leaves and other debris on ground, usually in open woods or overgrown field in area with many dead leaves. Females lay an average of four (1-5) eggs which hatch after 20-22 days of incubation.

Downy young leave the nest a few hours after hatching with the female feeding them. After a few days, the young begin probing in soil, learning to search for food. Young can make short flights at age two weeks, fly fairly well at three weeks and are independent at about five weeks.

Woodcocks head south in October to spend the winter in similar habitats in the southern part of their breeding range, also moving into additional wintering habitat in Texas and on the southern edges of the Gulf States.

2023 Bird Count nets new species

Mike Petrucha

On June 10, six participants met in the Gahagan parking lot at 8 a.m. for this year's June Bird Count. With cloudy and 57-degree weather and light south winds, it was a great morning to be out on the trails enjoying all the nature Gahagan has to offer, but there were periods of absolute bird silence.

We formed two groups to cover Gahagan, finding 116 individuals of 37 species in two hours of counting. All birds were counted by sight and sound.

We added four new species to the count; **American woodcock**, yellow-throated vireo, golden-crowned kinglet and chestnut-sided warbler. These newcomers bought the cumulative number of species found on the annual June count to 75.

The number of species found this yer was above the 12-year average of 33, and the number of individuals was below the 12-year average of 128. Black-capped chickadee was the most numerous species with 15 individuals found.

New high counts were established for mourning dove (3), brown thrasher (3) and Nashville warbler (2).

If you would like to see this and previous count results, go to <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1175836/activity?yr=all&m=> and look for the June Gahagan Birds checklists.

Please consider joining us on the next count, sometime during early June 2024. Details will be posted on the Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve Facebook page.



Phragmites control slated for fall

That tall “grass” growing on the side of the road may look pretty, but it’s really yet another in the growing list of invasive species that now call Michigan home.

The picture above is of the patch of *Phragmites australis* growing just west of Roscommon on County Road 100. The Gahagan Nature Preserve recently purchased the 34 acres that include this wetland area. Our plan is to attempt to eradicate this patch, with the assistance of Huron Pines, one of our conservation partners. The first of two treatments is set for mid September.

Michigan is home to a native sub-species of this plant which does not form thick patches as *P. australis* does, and tends to be shorter in height.

Private landowners who think they may be hosting non-native *Phragmites* can contact Shelby Bauer at 989-448-2293 or visit www.huronpines.org/huron-heartland-isn/ for assistance.

Warblers’ weekend festival still delights

By Mike Petrucha, Kirtland’s Warbler Festival Chair

The annual Kirtland’s Warbler Weekend started off Friday morning, June 2, at 7 a.m. with a bird-banding demonstration at the Gahagan Nature Preserve. Festivities continued Friday evening during the Kirtland’s Warbler Festival Home Opener, hosted by Gahagan NP. This included wine and beer tasting with a nice variety of Michigan-made products donated by 5th Street Wines, and appetizers contributed by Family Fare. Thank you both!



Learning experiences abound at the festival - even the chance to hold a snake!

Guided nature hikes were available, a pair of Kowa binoculars were raffled off, and the keynote speaker was Greg Bodker “Bird Watching and Birding.” More than 50 people attended and from the sound of all the laughter, they thoroughly enjoyed Greg’s talk.

The Kirtland’s Warbler Festival was on Saturday at the CRAF Center from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. and was again part of the Roscommon SummerFest, along with the Downtown Car Show and Village Cornhole Tournament.

The weather was near perfect, although it became hot in the afternoon. The morning started out with tours to see warblers at 7:30 and 10 a.m. and the 28 total participants all had excellent looks at multiple Kirtland’s and heard their bubbly song.

The rest of the festival festivities began at 10 am. The Kids’ Tent was busy all day with activities including face painting, skulls and furs, bird-house building, and live reptiles provided by Gahagan Nature Preserve, Nature Discovery, Michigan Loon Preservation Association, and Mikenauk Rock and Gem Club. Several natural resources agencies and nature organizations were there to answer questions.

Marie Rust, the featured artist, was there with a display of her artwork. Featured author Lori Taylor had three children’s story times. William Rapai from the Kirtland’s Warbler Alliance led several rounds of the Kirtland’s Warbler Migration Game. The 2023 U.S. Forest Service’s Young



Cindy Eschendal was the lucky winner of one of two pair of binoculars raffled during the festival.

Artists’ Contest winning artwork was on display and the artwork of the overall winner was used for the artwork on the festival button.

There was live music from Doug Thomas, and Fite Family Music sang their catchy Kirtland’s Warbler Song.

Vendors had a lot of traffic, including the Children’s Entrepreneur Market, which was a big hit.

Programs ran in the afternoon, with Haley Haradon speaking on his current work involving KW habitat use and survival after the breeding season. Dr. Steve Roels presented Bird on the Move: Looking to the Past to Secure the Future of the Kirtland’s Warbler. Jim McGrath from Nature Discovery, always a crowd favorite, gave a program on Michigan snakes.

Plan to attend May 31–June 1, 2024, in Roscommon.



Right on cue, a Kirtland’s warbler landed in a dead tree and sang its heart out for the morning tour goers.



Left are the two winners in the Bird-house Artist Contest, hosted for the first time during this year’s festival. The winners were determined by silent auction - these two tied for highest bids!

Below, this budding artist gets up close and personal with her makeover client as part of the Children’s Entrepreneur Market—a welcome addition to this year’s festivities at the CRAF Center.

