

Water's Edge

Gratiot Lake Conservancy News



Volume 25

Fall 2023

Gratiot Lake Conservancy Celebrates 25 Years

Our quarter-century milestone was marked by some special programming, an Open House at Noblet Field Station, and a 25th Anniversary Dinner in appreciation of members and supporters. Thank you to everyone who made this a landmark year!



25th Anniversary Planning Committee with some GLC Board Members at celebratory dinner: Gina Nicholas, Louis Lizzadro, Bonnie Hay, Miriam Lytle, Amanda Lizzadro-McPherson, and Daniel Lizzadro-McPherson. Committee members Winona Asher and Lucy Granroth not pictured.

Since its inception in 1998, GLC has grown through the efforts and support of many individuals and organizations. The GLC Board of Directors and officers has guided our progress and provided oversight of GLC's financial health. A non-profit cannot achieve its ends without the contributions of members, donors, advisors, grantors, and volunteers. Many shared their professional expertise, often pro bono. Many participated in stewardship activities such as shoreline clean-ups (photo below circa 2005), lake water monitoring with CLMP and MLSA, and invasive plant removal with KISMA,



or assisted with upkeep of Noblet Field Station and trails. Others assisted with events and media outreach.

Donations have been made of equipment, supplies, and land. From the initial 64+ acres and Noblet cabin donated to GLC in 1998 by the Lizzadro family, GLC's ownership of conservation land has grown through subsequent Lizzadro donations and GLC purchases to 708+ acres at Gratiot Lake and 466 acres at Bammert Farm. GLC shoreline, the Bear Paw Path, and the path to the Little Gratiot River are open to everyone for hiking and low impact use. This land is managed by the Keweenaw Community Forest Company (KCFC) and stewardship is a high priority for the Conservancy. GLC also holds a conservation easement for the Little Gratiot River Wilderness (owned by KCFC).

Gratiot Lake residents are wonderful neighbors. They cherish the wild nature of their home and want to protect it. GLC could not have flourished without the continued support of friends at Gratiot Lake. (Open House at Noblet Field Station in 2009 photo below.)



Membership from throughout the Keweenaw Peninsula increased in tandem with the Conservancy's education programs, some highlights:

1999-2001 Headwater's Mike Schiewe and Raven brought their young naturalist mentoring programs to the Noblet Field Station. Artist Donna Lenard

GLC Celebrates 25 Years continued on page 4

GLC Gratefully Acknowledges Donors

November 1, 2022 to November 1, 2023

Major Donors



William Bingham and Laura Cison
Bonnie and Jim Hay
Carol and Joseph Lizzadro
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We Remember friends and neighbors who recently passed away...

Steven Leuthold, founder of the Leuthold Family Foundation, sustaining grantor of funds to GLC and many other Keweenaw conservation organizations. He engaged his children in the continuation of this philanthropy.

Herb Marutz, Life Member of GLC, who was a warm-hearted and generous friend to GLC. Friends at Gratiot Lake would often find him at their door, smiling and laden with gifts of his garden harvest or cookies.



Land Fund

Mike and Sylvia Cooper
Diane and David Gothard
Peg Hertel
Robert and Maria Macfarlane
Linda Rehorst
Holly Schipper



GLC Fund at Keweenaw Community Foundation

Michael and Mary Bingham
Nancy Leonard

GLC Celebrates 25 Years continued from front page. enriched this teaching. The mentoring program influenced career paths for some of these students.

2002-Present Astronomy nights, initially held on Brockway Mountain, with Robert Nemiroff and his Michigan Tech students sharing stellar highlights. This year the star watch took place on Mt. Horace Greeley in collaboration with Open Skies Project.

2003-2010 *Reading the Landscape: Art and Natural History Field Trips for Adults*. A 2004 field trip group examining the aquatic community at Gratiot Lake is pictured below. GLC partnered with other historical and



conservation organizations to offer this very popular series. For eight years the series engaged local scientists and artists as field trip leaders introducing new ways to understand and enjoy conservation lands.

2004-Present. Art in Nature. Marilyn Brandenburger was artist-in-residence at Noblet Field Station for a month and returned to share her watercolor nature journaling expertise with students at GLC. This year's dried plant workshop led by Nancy Leonard (kneeling at center in group photo below) carried on the tradition of mixing science and art.



2003-2018 The Conservancy's support for teacher salary and group use of the Noblet Field Station, brought Michigan Tech's *Summer Youth Program (SYP) Exploration: Aquatic Ecology at Gratiot Lake* to the GLC Preserve. *The Rita and Jack Sandretto Scholarship* enabled many high schoolers to attend the



program led by inspiring teachers such as Brian Rajdl. Photo above is of 2004 SYP students surveying a beaver flooding. GLC has offered programs (some are now virtual), workshops, and field trips focusing on the ecology, geology/geo-heritage, and the human history of the land. From the podium or in the field, experts have shared information on natural history topics such as: shoreline ecology, birds, freshwater mussels, dragonflies, moths, mushrooms, frogs, lichens, bats, invasive species, and native plants. Photo above is of the 2017 Birdlife of the Keweenaw Workshop led by ornithologist David Flaspohler (center with orange



hat). *Janet and Bud Avery Scholarships* are awarded to cover student costs for some fee-based workshops.

Research focusing on the ecosystem and natural community at Gratiot Lake continues and is often shared through field trips, presentations, and media. Botanist Janet Marr's plant ID workshops (2006 photo



Marr on right) attracted both conservation professionals and amateur naturalists. Her surveys of the terrestrial and aquatic plants at Gratiot formed a baseline for land management and led to GLC's

publication of a handbook by Marr on the identification of aquatic plants in Keweenaw lakes.

The GLC Preserve hosts a small mammal population research site of John Yunger and his Governor's State U. students. Yunger has led visits to his research site and workshops at the GLC Preserve and has served as a GLC go-to expert on wildlife. Ornithologist Zach Gayk has studied migratory birds and nesting birds. Michigan Tech's Industrial Archeology Department teachers and students researched the artifacts of and records relating to Bammert Farm's history. Wildlife cameras at the GLC preserve have captured year-round images of furred and feathered conservancy residents.



Gratiot lake eagles were media stars for over twenty years thanks to webmaster/photographer Jim Hay, who posted photos and videos of eaglet antics in the nest on GLC's website. You can see Jim's videos and photos and revisit much more historical media/content through the archived website link at www.gratiotlakeconservancy.org/archives.

Thanks to all of you who have read *Water's Edge* newsletter over its 25 years of publication and welcome to those of you who are reading it for the first time. Elsewhere in this edition are updates on upcoming programs including our virtual book club and more conservancy and wildlife news!

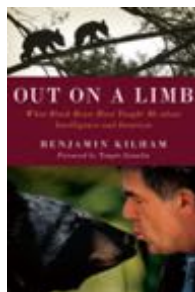


GLC's new membership software includes an online member portal. GLC's WildApricot webpages allow new and existing members to update their contact information and to donate and renew securely online with a credit card if they prefer.

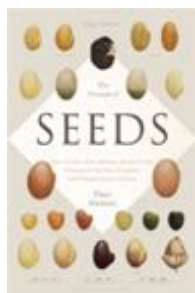
GLC (virtual) Book Club—Bears and Seeds

On Saturday, January 27th from Noon – 1:15 Eastern Time we will discuss two books about the black bear. [Read one or both](#) and email director@GratiotLakeConservancy.org to get the discussion link.

Walking with Bears: One Man's Relationship with Three Generations of Wild Bears by Terry DeBruyn, 272 pages. Published in 1999 the book is out-of-print, but available in many upper Midwest libraries and also for purchase through used book sellers. Wildlife biologist DeBruyn researched his subject in an up-close-and-personal manner for six seasons in the U.P. He slowly acclimated a wild black bear to his presence and followed in her footsteps to observe her behavior.



Out on a Limb: What Black Bears Have Taught Me about Intelligence and Intuition by wildlife biologist Benjamin Kilham, with forward by Temple Grandin, 224 pages. Published in 2013 it is available in a variety of formats. According to the Goodreads review, "*Out on a Limb* delivers Kilham's fascinating glimpse at the inner world of bears, and also makes a passionate case for science, and education in general, to open its doors to different ways of learning and researching—doors that could lead to far broader realms of discovery." Kilham and his work have been featured in documentaries and in radio and TV shows. Kilham is an experienced wildlife rehabilitator and founder of the Kilham Bear Center in Connecticut which fosters orphaned bear cubs.



On Saturday, March 23rd from Noon – 1:15 Eastern Time we discuss *The Triumph of Seeds* by conservation biologist Thor Hanson, 277 pages, 2015. This book is available in a variety of formats. Hanson, a winner of the John Burroughs Medal for Nature Writing, pursues his subject with the humor and liveliness of a storyteller and keen eye of a scientist. In telling the story of seeds, he deftly weaves together evolution, ecology, and human history. Email director@GratiotLakeConservancy.org to get the discussion link.

Are warmer waters causing lake changes?

Summer water temperatures have risen at Gratiot Lake in the last few decades. Although nice for swimmers, these higher water temps lead to more frequent and persistent algal blooms, which may be driving the occurrence of two events folks who swim in freshwater lakes don't like ... harmful algal blooms (HAB) and swimmers' itch.

Algal blooms are normal in inland lakes, part of the natural ecology. Increased nutrients and lake temperature spur more algal blooms and aquatic plant growth. Most species of algae are beneficial to the lake ecosystem and harmless to humans and pets. However, in the last two years in mid to late September potentially harmful cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms have appeared. HAB look like bright green paint slicks on top of the water. When HAB are present people and pets should stay away from the bright green slick or risk skin irritation from contact or when ingested—possible poisoning.



Native snail populations seem to have increased in many of the shallow gravel or muck substrate areas at Gratiot Lake. Could snail increase be due to more food

availability? Plant and algal growth is spurred by warmer Gratiot waters. The swimmers' itch parasite inhabits many species of snails as part of its life cycle.

Unfortunately, that parasite, when present in the shallow water can mistakenly imbed in human skin instead of its intended target... the snail. Though not a human parasite, it can cause an allergic reaction in people.

Eagle Scout project improvements at GLC!

A shout out to Eagle Scout candidate, Jack Mueller (in orange shirt



in photo at left) and the Hancock Boy Scout Troop #209 members for the construction and installation of four attractive benches for the GLC fire pit area and improvements to that area. The group also replaced some deteriorated sections of boardwalk on the Bear Paw Path. Jack planned and organized this construction and with the help of his troop and accompanying adults successfully completed it. Jack's Eagle Scout project enhances the enjoyment

and safety of visitors to the Noblet Field Station and the Bear Paw Path.

Three Cheers for our Volunteers!

KISMA weed crew and volunteers for invasive plant removal at Gratiot Lake.

Andrew Younger and his friend Tommy for work at the Noblet Field Station!

Dorothy Jamison, Jim and Bonnie Hay, and Jack and Carolyn Meyer for their lake water quality monitoring assistance. Gratiot Lake's Cooperative Lake Monitoring Program report is available to view on the GLC website or at www.micorps.org

Robert Nemiroff and his Michigan Tech students for leading the astronomy night on Mt. Horace Greeley.

Nancy Leonard for expertly co-leading the dried plant workshop and for donated materials, and to Amanda Lizzadro-McPherson who came up with the workshop idea, donated materials, and shared project ideas.

Mary, Mike and Bill Bingham, Ella and Garri Budynsky, Diane and Dave Gothard, Jim and Bonnie Hay, Dorothy Jamison, Mike Lamielle, Daniel and Amanda Lizzadro-McPherson, Dave Mitchell, and Bruce and Pat Wagner who removed over 220 pounds of trash from Gratiot Lake shoreline during the annual shoreline cleanup.

Pete, Bill, and Mike Bingham for lending their carpentry skills to plant press construction and for donating wood for the project.

Jim Tercha for pro bono services.

The 25th Anniversary Planning Committee: Miriam Lytle, Winona Asher, Daniel and Amanda Lizzadro-McPherson, and Gina Nicholas for helping us celebrate.

Charles Anderson, Gina Nicholas, and Jim Hay for sponsoring the Anniversary Dinner.

GLC Board and Officers: Bonnie Hay, Pres., Louis Lizzadro, VP, Gina Nicholas, Sec., Will Lytle, Daniel Lizzadro-McPherson, and incoming board member Tony Lizzadro. Thanks also to Emeritus Directors, Joseph Lizzadro and John Lizzadro.

KCFC for faithfully managing GLC land.

Jim and Ben Hay for proofreading this newsletter.

Those who contributed photos: Shane Mueller, Mary Dana, Jim and Bonnie Hay, Dorothy Jamison, Gina Nicholas, and others.

Please contact Bonnie Hay, editor, with questions, corrections, or comments related to *Water's Edge News*. If you would like to submit articles, observations, or photos please get in touch:

Bonnie@GratiotLakeConservancy.org

Move over Giant Pumpkin!



Giant puffballs, *Calvatia gigantea*, popped up here and there near Gratiot Lake in September. It was a forager's dream, if the forager had a large enough refrigerator for storage, or, perhaps, a large mushroom lovers' event to cater. The pictured ripening specimen to the right of Peter Lytle was one of the biggest in the Gratiot Lake puffball troop. This specimen, reminiscent of a cratered moon, had already been sampled by other creatures, including the slug ensconced in one of its craters. However, evidence that a mushroom has been sampled by other creatures is not a guarantee of its safety for human consumption.

A giant puffball should be positively identified by an experienced fungi forager before eating. Also, edible giant puffball flesh (when the mushroom is sliced in half) must be uniformly firm, smooth, and creamy white throughout the inside. As the puffball ripens, its flesh turns yellowish and darkens. A press of your finger will quickly puncture a ripening ball. Ripe puffballs cannot be safely eaten, and won't taste good either! After determining its identity, a giant puffball in its prime can be safely consumed. A favorite recipe is sliced, fresh puffball slabs dipped in egg and seasoned breadcrumbs and fried. It can be used in the same manner as similarly prepared chicken cutlets. Giant puffball can be substituted for tofu in cooked dishes and, like tofu, takes on the flavor of any dish it is added to. A bonus is that giant puffballs, like many edible mushrooms, are quite nutritious.

The mushrooms that we see are the reproductive "fruit" of a fungi which consists of rootlike mycelium threads, in this case on dead plant material underground. The puffball is packed with spores.

When spores are ripe, they will poof like smoke out of the deteriorating, cracking ball. According to the Cornell University mushroom blog, a 10 inch diameter giant puffball contains an estimated 7 trillion minute spores which are dispersed by wind! Why so many spores? Very, very few will land in a suitable location for survival.

Merlin in Distress



Thanks to caring Gratiot Lake residents Sue Dana, Mary Sayen Dana (her photo above), and Bill Bingham, and the assistance of volunteer raptor rehabilitator Beth Maatta this baby merlin got a chance to thrive. The fluffy bundle with the big feet pictured above was found on the ground not far from Gratiot Lake's public boat access.

If you find a healthy baby bird prematurely ejected from the nest, the advice is to place it back in the nest, or if it is a fledgling with flight feathers, place the bird on a higher, safer perch where parents can find and feed it. This merlin's nest was up too high to safely reach. The nestling had not yet grown flight feathers and would have been easy prey if left on the ground. The uninjured, downy merlin was dropped off at Maatta's home for fostering. Beth is part of the *U.P. Wildlife Rehabilitation Keweenaw Group*. She cares for injured or orphaned raptors (such as this merlin) and small wild mammals. Here are some local wildlife rehabilitator contacts:

U.P. Wildlife Rehabilitation Keweenaw Group (serving Houghton and Keweenaw counties):

Beth Maatta (located in Hancock) specializing in birds and small mammals. 906-370-3825

Jan Burroughs (located in Lake Linden) specializing in wild mammals. 906-369-2027

Keweenaw Wild Bird Rec: (located in Boston Location):

Michelle Anderson specializing in migratory wild birds that are NOT hawks, falcons, eagles, or owls. 216-577-2989



Not too late to Celebrate GLC's 25 !th

All contributions are appreciated. Donate

\$100 or more and have the option to receive notecards with Jim Hay's photos.

Below, a Sandhill crane adult and its chick stroll along Gratiot Lake Shoreline.



Renew your Membership for 2024!

Gratiot Lake Conservancy

P.O. Box 310

Mohawk, MI 49950

Online Donation Options:

www.GratiotLakeConservancy.org/ways-to-contribute

*Season's Greetings!
Thank YOU!*



Been missing GLC email updates?

GLC shares news and event updates year-round with emails sent through *MailChimp*. You won't receive them if we don't have your current email or if our emails go into your spam folder. Adding both of our emails to your address book may help.

Need to give us an update? Have questions?

Please Get in touch:

Info/Membership: Director@GratiotLakeConservancy.org

Bonnie Hay: Bonnie@GratiotLakeConservancy.org



GLC's new membership software includes an online member portal. These GLC webpages hosted through Personify WildApricot allow new and existing members to update their contact information and also to donate and renew securely online with a credit card if they prefer. GLC member/supporters will soon receive an invitation to log in to view or update their information securely.



September view from Mt. Horace Greeley looking towards Gratiot Lake, Lac LaBelle, and Bete Grise.