

Water's Edge

Gratiot Lake Conservancy News



Volume 10

Fall 2008



Courtesy of Carol Lizzadro

Herpetologist Edie Sonntag poses with a mink frog captured during GLC's Frog Walk in July. Nineteen children and adults attended the walk in which four species of frogs in various stages of development, salamanders, and one turtle were observed. Visit the GLC website to learn more about U.P. amphibians and reptiles.

Get on the List!

With the *Guide to Aquatic Plants of Gratiot Lake and Other Keweenaw County Lakes* completed and an accompanying CD in the works, now is the time to register to receive a copy! This tool will be available for use by residents near Keweenaw inland lakes, community groups and organizations interested in monitoring Keweenaw inland lakes, local governments, students/teachers focusing on inland lake ecology and lake surveys, and researchers. We are compiling a list of those in the Keweenaw Peninsula who will receive a booklet/CD free of charge. Depending on location, there may be a nominal shipping and handling charge.

If you are interested in learning to survey and monitor lakes to assure healthy waters or to distinguish both potentially invasive aquatic species or possibly rare aquatic species of plants in Keweenaw lakes, please [contact GLC via e-mail](#) or send us a note to reserve a copy. GLC plans to offer an *Aquatic Plants and Aquatic Invasives* workshop in August of 2009 in conjunction with the distribution of the handbook/CD.

Celebration of GLC's First Decade

Fifty-five members and friends of the Gratiot Lake Conservancy attended a members dinner meeting on July 29 celebrating GLC's first ten years. A slide show illustrated past events with many of those in attendance pictured. GLC President Joseph Lizzadro presided over the election of directors: Bonnie Hay, John Lizzadro, Joseph Lizzadro, and Gina Nicholas. Director Bonnie Hay gave highlights of programs and accomplishments. Gina Nicholas gave an update on Bammert Farm, sustainable forestry, and signage. Volunteers were honored and a special award was given to Virginia Jamison for her efforts from GLC's inception in 1998. Ed Kaeding and Marilyn Jones won door prizes. Herpetologist Edythe Sonntag (pictured at left during the next day's field trip) presented an engaging and informative slide show on Upper Peninsula reptiles and amphibians.



Courtesy of Jessica Brassard

Karin Van Dyke (l.), member of the Community Foundation of the the Upper Peninsula Advisory Committee, presents GLC Director Bonnie Hay (r.) with a check from the Keweenaw Sustainable Forestry and Wildlife Fund. Funds were used to partially defray publishing costs of the *Guide to Aquatic Plants of Gratiot Lake and Other Keweenaw County Lakes*.

GLC gratefully acknowledges this year's Donors to the Land Acquisition Fund, Education Fund, or to GLC's General Operating Budget...

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Estate of Rebecca (Rita) Sandretto

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In Remembrance of Diana Nicholas

Diana Nicholas, who supported the Gratiot Lake Conservancy from its inception, passed away on July 2, 2008.

Diana was a lifelong summer resident near Gratiot Lake. She felt that the very best of her soul was developed in the Keweenaw—hunting for agates, picking berries, walking in the woods, and enjoying the natural beauty of the area. She believed that conservation and good stewardship of the land would protect this place she loved for future generations. Along with her siblings, Diana donated the Bammert Farm land to GLC in 2004.

Diana, a creative person and patron of the arts, particularly enjoyed arts related GLC programs. She is pictured here at a *Reading the Landscape of the Keweenaw Arts and Natural History* field trip which focused on mosses. Diana was an enthusiastic participant in Marilyn Brandenburger's watercolor workshop at the Noblet Field Station and was the gracious hostess of a 2006 *Reading the Landscape* field trip which visited the forest at Bammert Farm.

We miss Diana, a loyal and generous Gratiot Lake Conservancy friend and neighbor.

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Emerald Ash Borer Threatens Ash Trees

An insect pest imported accidentally from Asia is a major threat to ash trees in Michigan. Twenty million of the estimated 700 million ash trees in the state have already succumbed.

Emerald ash borer was discovered in the Keweenaw in a cemetery in Laurium in August. The insect infestation may have been present there unnoticed for several years. A neighbor saw the ash trees dying and sought the help of the local agricultural extension agent, Mike Shira, who identified the problem. Infestations have subsequently been detected in Swedetown and in several eastern U.P. counties as well.

A quarantine has been placed on transporting hardwood firewood and ash logs and pulpwood within Keweenaw and Houghton counties. Moving firewood accounts for 95% of emerald ash borer spread. The area is being monitored to identify any further spread of the borer.

Some things you can do:

1. Learn to identify ash trees and keep an eye on those in your area. Only ash trees are affected, in the Keweenaw mainly black ash, white ash, and green ash. At Gratiot Lake most ash trees are black ash.
2. Learn to recognize emerald ash borer and signs of emerald ash borer infestation. Other diseases and borers can affect ash trees, but are not as great of a threat. Visit the websites www.michigan.gov/eab or www.emeraldashborer.info.
3. If you think you may have an emerald ash borer infestation call the statewide reporting number the toll-free EAB hotline at 866-325-0023 or consult with Mike Shira at the Houghton and Keweenaw County Agricultural Extension 906-482-5830 to make a positive ID.
4. Use only local firewood and do not transport firewood, ash logs or ash pulp from place to place.



photo by David Cappaert, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org

Is it Emerald Ash Borer?

The beetle is about ½ inch long (photo magnified 2X) with metallic green wing covers and a purple-brown abdomen. The white, wormlike larvae feed on the wood, thereby creating sinuous “S” shaped tunnels under the tree’s bark. They exit infested trees through distinctive “D” shaped holes in the outer bark of branches and trunks.

If an ash tree is looking sickly, check for the beetle from May through September and for “D” shaped exit holes. Ash trees are host to other diseases and borers – an ash tree that’s sick is not necessarily infested with emerald ash borer.



Black Ash, *Fraxinus nigra*
compound leaf (not to scale) and seed cluster

illustration courtesy of USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions.*

Is it an Ash tree?

Black, green, and white ash are affected by emerald ash borer. True ash trees (*Fraxinus* genus) have opposite branching, pinnately compound leaves with 7-11 leaflets, and flat, paddle-shaped seeds. The illustration above is of one ash leaf (not to scale--length of leaf is 8 to 12 inches). Opposite branching means that leaves are positioned directly across from one another on the stem in pairs. The tree itself will have many branches which are pairs, one opposite the other on the limb.

In the Keweenaw, there are two main look alike to the true ashes--mountain ash and box elder--that are unaffected by emerald ash borer. Mountain ash (*Sorbus* genus) has alternate branching, pinnately compound leaves, clusters of white flowers in spring, and orange berries (rather than winged seeds) in fall. Box Elder (*Acer* genus) is opposite branching and has compound leaves with only 3 to 5 leaflets.

A good guide to identifying ash and its look alike is available on the [emeraldashborer.info website](http://emeraldashborer.info).

**GLC renewals for 2009 are due.
For a downloadable
membership/donation form click here!**

He Didn't Need an Ice Pack...

In early July, at dusk, a saw-whet owl went for a bird on our deck, missed, and hit a window. The owl stood briefly stunned on the deck and then hopped up on one of the chairs. From this perch it surveyed us intently. After a few minutes and a short photo shoot (photo to right), the owl flew away without apparent injury.

Only seven inches tall, saw-whet owls are among the most diminutive of owls. Their name alludes to their soft whistling call, sometimes heard in winter and spring, which is likened to the sound of sharpening of a saw blade on a strap. Although not uncommon in the Keweenaw, saw-whet owls are rarely seen and seldom heard, so we felt privileged to have had this encounter.

The collision of the owl with our window was an unintended consequence of living in a home located in a natural setting. Bird collisions with windows seem especially prevalent in spring and late summer/fall during migration. The box below offers some tips to minimize bird impacts. Links to more information are on the GLC website.



MINIMIZING BIRD IMPACTS on WINDOWS

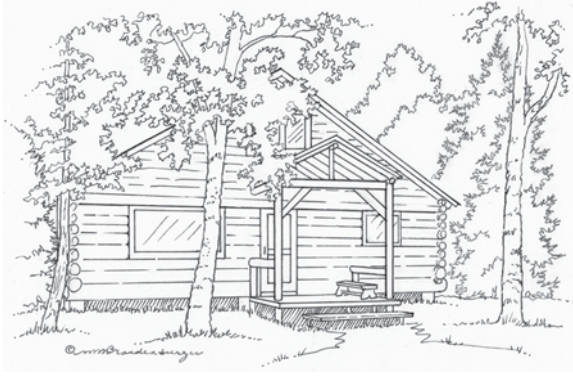
1. If collisions occur near where you feed the birds, move feeders to a new location. Moving feeders within three feet or less of windows or at least 30 feet away from windows may help.
2. Some collisions occur because birds see a window as transparent. Placing something such as hawk silhouette decals or spider web decals on the inside of the window birds are hitting may help. To be most effective, the silhouettes must be placed close together.
3. Some collisions occur because birds see reflections in the window. Placing objects such as fluttering ribbons, silhouettes, or mesh netting on the outside of the offending window may help. Putting something on the outside of windows is usually more effective than putting something on the inside.
4. Cover windows with light colored drapes or shades when possible.
5. More information (links on GLC website):
Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/>
Audubon Society: http://audubon.org/bird/at_home/SafeWindows.html

Visit the Gratiot Lake Conservancy web site to view current and archived issues of *Water's Edge Newsletter* (in full color), informative articles, updated calendar, photos, video clips, and links to more information.

<http://www.MLSWA.org/Gratiot-Lake-1508/>

Answers to Crossword on Page 7:

1. wood frog, 2. redpoll, 3. yellow perch, 4. black bear, 5. chipmunk, 6. deer, 7. ermine, 8. garter snake, 9. loon, 10. grouse, 11. mosquito, 12. little brown bat, 13. white pine, 14. black ash, 15. river otter



Memorial Plaque

A beautiful slab of maple milled from a tree which fell on Virginia Jamison's home at Gratiot Lake has been made into a memorial plaque. The plaque displays the names of those in whose memory donations have been made to Gratiot Lake Conservancy and has space for future additions.

Mike LaMielle volunteered his time to cut and finish the wood slab on which plates bearing the names of those memorialized are mounted. An image of the Noblet Field Station (above) donated in memory of Diana Nicholas by artist Marilynn Brandenburger adorns the plaque. The names of twenty-five friends and neighbors of GLC, many whose history is part of Gratiot Lake history, are included on the plaque which will be installed at the Noblet Field Station next year.

Wilderness Learning at Noblet's

In July, Noblet Field Station was home to another hardy group of high school students attending Michigan Tech's *Summer Youth Program Exploration: Aquatic Ecology at Gratiot Lake*. The students and teachers (pictured at right) spent five days exploring lake, creek, and beaver pond ecology, while enjoying a rustic stay at the field station. Bill Loukkanen (seated at far right in the photo), a Calumet High student who is interested in wildlife ecology, was the recipient of the *Jack and Rita Sandretto Scholarship* to attend the program. For information on enrolling in next year's program at the lake and for scholarship information call 906-487-2219 or visit the website <http://youthprograms.mtu.edu/>



Courtesy of Dorothy Jamison

Proud Volunteers!

Emma and Riley Jamison pitched in to clean up Gratiot Lake's "Sandy Beach" in September. Ten volunteers participated in the [International Coastal Cleanup](#) at the lake and pulled out more than 20 pounds of trash from approximately 4 miles of shoreline.



About *Water's Edge*

Water's Edge is the newsletter of the Gratiot Lake Conservancy. Its purpose is to report Conservancy news, to share information about the ecology and history of Gratiot Lake and its environs, and to suggest ways to improve stewardship of the Lake and its watershed. View *Water's Edge* in color on the GLC website.

**Please send questions, comments, or articles to
Bonnie Hay, *Water's Edge* Editor
Gratiot Lake Conservancy
P.O. Box 310
Mohawk, MI 49950**

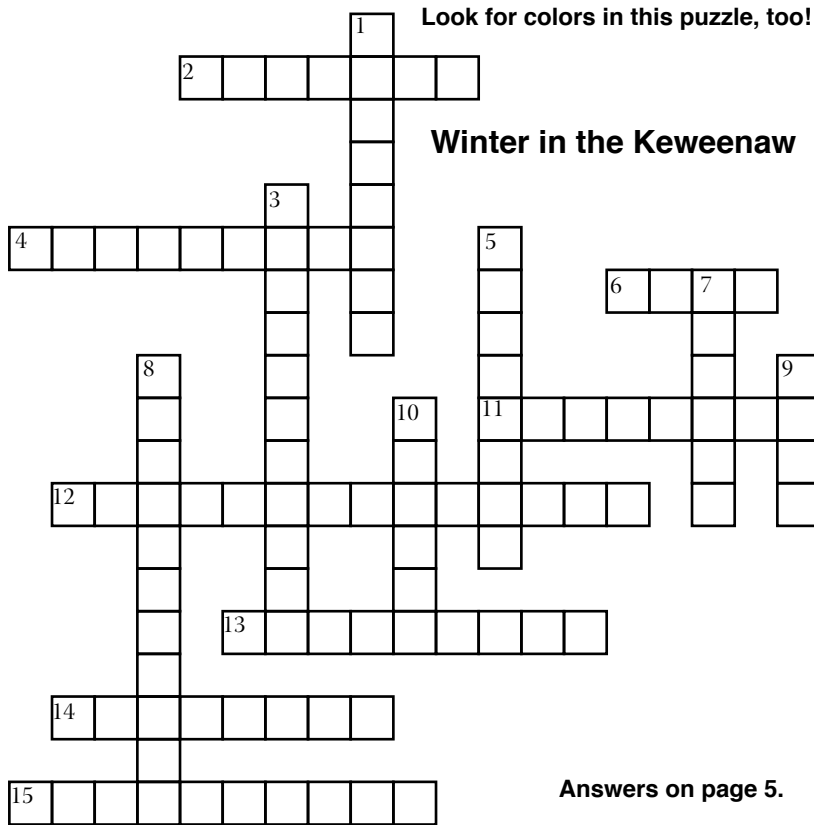
**e-mail: belh@verizon.net phone: 906-337-5476
Visit our web site: www.mlswa.org/gratiot-lake-1508/**

Down:

- 1. This amphibian (whose first name rhymes with “good”) can freeze solid (even its heart) in winter. It thaws out in early spring, ready to sing, mate, and lay eggs!! (two words)
- 3. As ice fishermen will attest, this fish is one of many that are active and hungry even under snow covered ice. (two words)
- 5. This striped rodent, a true hibernator, can reduce its body temperature to nearly freezing during hibernation and slow its heart rate from 350 beats per minute to 4 beats per minute.
- 7. This weasel’s coat turns white in winter except for the tip of its tail. The black tail tip may serve to distract larger predators.
- 8. This common striped reptile goes into a dormant state in a tight cluster with many of its kind in a den. This strategy conserves warmth and provides easy access to potential mates in the spring. (two words)
- 9. This diving bird, a frequently heard summer resident at Gratiot Lake, spends the winter without song in the Atlantic Ocean. There it eats salt water fish and excretes excess salt from special glands near its eyes.
- 10. This bird uses the insulating properties of snow. It flies into a fluffy snow bank and stays relatively warmer than the frigid temperatures above the snow. In the snow, it uses 45 percent less energy to produce body warmth. Its name rhymes with “mouse”.

Look for colors in this puzzle, too!

Winter in the Keweenaw



Answers on page 5.

Across:

- 2. This finch with a black chin and a red forehead is seen in the Keweenaw in winter—often at feeders. It has a throat pouch in which it quickly stores seeds for later dining in a protected spot.
- 4. This mammal is a voracious eater in the fall, gaining up to 100 pounds. It loses 30% to 40% of its weight during its torpid winter sleep. (two words)
- 6. This large mammal uses dense white cedar stands for cover and food in winter. These overwintering spots are called “___ yards”.
- 11. This animal sucks blood to nourish her eggs in summer. Its eggs survive the winter—ready to hatch into aquatic larvae in spring.
- 12. This winged mammal hibernates with tens to hundreds of thousands of its kind in abandoned mine shafts. Some of these Keweenaw mine shafts have been protected by closures, which allow this animal to enter, while keeping larger animals (including people) out. (three words)
- 13. The cone shaped habit of growth of this and other conifer trees enables the young tree to easily shed snow. Its evergreen needles are covered with a thick, waxy coating of cutin which reduces winter water loss. (two words)
- 14. This deciduous tree, which is threatened by emerald ash borer, loses its leaves in the fall and remains dormant until spring. (two words)
- 15. This mammal appears to play in the snow by sliding and tobogganing. Its slides can be observed near rivers and lakes. (two words)

Trail Work in Progress

Improvements to the *Bear Paw Path* at the Gratiot Lake preserve are underway. Forester Brett Huntzinger and volunteer Steve Beach brought a chainsaw mill on site to saw boards from fallen cedar. These boards will be used to construct board-walk over some wet areas on the existing trail. A few rustic benches will be added as well. We plan to re-mark the trail and put in signs.

The trail itself is being extended and a loop trail which leads to a high overlook to a beaver dam has also been added. When the trail is completed in 2009, an updated trail map will be available in a box at the trailhead and at the Noblet Field Station or be available for download on the Conservancy website. The trail for much of its length runs just inland from the lakeshore and comes out to shoreline in a couple of places. The topography is rolling and some uphill climbs are challenging.

Additional help will be needed next spring and summer to complete this project. Contact GLC if you would like to help.



In August, some residents at Gratiot Lake observed a ruby-throated hummingbird at their feeders with a dark ball about the size of a small blueberry encircling its beak. The bird, dubbed “Blueberry,” was able to feed and very slightly open its beak.

Blueberry looked rather scruffy—perhaps due to an inability to groom properly with a restricted beak. Jim Hay was able to get a close-up photo of her. Then we clearly saw that the head of a dragonfly was impaled on her beak!

How might this have happened? Hummingbirds do eat insects, but this was a rather huge insect! Perhaps a head on collision?

She disappeared around the time hummingbirds begin to migrate. Hopefully, that dragonfly head has deteriorated and fallen off.

Would you like to attend the Michigan Lake and Stream Conference in April?

This gathering of representatives from lake associations throughout the state will take place on April 24 and 25 at Houghton Lake, Michigan. A *Janet Avery Scholarship* is available to defray expenses of someone who would like to attend and represent GLC. Issues and information useful to Keweenaw lakes and riparian landowners will be discussed. More information is available on the Michigan Lake and Stream Associations website at mlswa.org. Please let GLC know if you are interested in attending.

GLC Life Membership Now Available

Gratiot Lake Conservancy now offers the option of a life membership for individuals. A contribution of \$500 or more for Life Membership offers the convenience of a one-time enrollment. Life memberships, like annual memberships and donations, are tax deductible.

*Click here for a downloadable membership/donation form.
Please indicate your desire to become a Life Member.*

Support GLC !

Gratiot Lake Conservancy members receive a biannual newsletter, notice of special events, and an invitation to the Annual Members Meeting. Some GLC programs that have fees are discounted for members. Membership is \$15.

[Click here for a downloadable membership/donation form.](#)
[The membership year is from January 1 to December 31st, but you may join at any time.](#)

Donations to GLC are always welcome.

Donors of \$100 or more will receive a gift of notecards with photos taken at Gratiot Lake.

Click here to view this chipping sparrow and other Gratiot Lake notecard photos in full color!

