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WINTER 2005/06

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ROYAL OAK NATURE SOCIETY

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

*Current Membership  
Season: Sept '05-Aug '06*

Membership dues for the current season must be paid up in order to have future issues of our newsletter, beginning with the '06 spring edition, mailed to you. Please check last line on your address label to see if your membership is current or not current. If not current, please fill out a membership form (pg. 5) and mail it along with a check to the Nature Society.

A membership entitles you to have our newsletter mailed to you four times a year. The mailing begins with the fall issue and ends with the summer one. Your membership will help to cover the cost of printing and mailing of our newsletter and will also assist in funding educational programs that we provide.

Non-members are still welcome to come to our monthly speaker programs as well as our nature walks. Those programs and walks are, and always will be, free to anyone who enjoys learning about nature.

## Cummingston Park, Tenhave Woods and What We Have Been Doing

BY BOB MULLER

The Royal Oak Nature Society has completed five years of providing great nature programs and the stewardship of maintaining and improving the nature parks for the community. Our programs continue to mature, but the big change is the start of large projects to improve wildlife habitat and provide better opportunities for the public to utilize both parks. We are actively pursuing methods of raising funds for the Society to get public programs up and running; something we simply did not have time for during the last five years.

We have done research on the flooding problem in Cummingston Park and believe we have a method of controlling this. The Nature Society along with Dr. Kevin Zipple, the past head of the National Amphibian Conservation Center at the Detroit Zoo, has done research on our vernal ponds during the last five years. Edythe Sonntag, a PhD candidate also from the Zoo, is continuing to work with us on bringing back amphibians. The Clinton River Watershed Council and the North American Native Fishes Association have partnered with us on macro-invertebrate surveys in the vernal ponds. This knowledge is now beginning to be used for planning and restoration of the aquatic parts of our nature parks.

A great deal of time was spent on writing a Forest Management plan for our nature parks. This started with the

Board being presented with information on this Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) program by Dena Sorrento. With the approval of the board, Helen Cost wrote a request for a grant. We received grant approval last January. Usually, the board does not meet in the summer, but this year we were very busy reviewing what Matt Cramer, a MDNR certified plan writer who was hired to write the plan, was coming up with. At an August 29th meeting, the plan was approved by attending Nature Society board members and was sent to the MDNR for their approval on September 8th. One of the items in the plan was the improvement of the pond in Tenhave Woods, which we are actively involved with now. This will make a fantastic outdoor classroom for the study of vernal pond life and has been named Dragonfly Pond.

Jack Kerby, who is heading up our Beautification & Restoration committee, along with his small crew of retirees has continued working on Cummingston Park. They have been maintaining our nature trails there and they continue to strive to get the new entrance to the park kicked off. Hopefully, it will happen this year, as it would make the park much more inviting. Jack has also done some experiments with garlic mustard control and seems to be having some success. We have an Eagle Scout candidate who is working up a plan to create a pond

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along Meijer Drive, at the end of Leafdale Trail. If his plan is okayed, parts of it may start as early as February, with completion in October. We still have problems at Cummington. For years someone has been dumping landscaping waste in the park. Many bushes have been thrown over the fence along Torquay and a trailer full on brush was backed into the park and dumped this past spring. Regularly, there is dumping in the parking area east of Leafdale. This spring, someone tapped 15 maple trees in the southwest corner of the park, leaving tubing and buckets in the park, not to mention holes in the trees. Hopefully, we will someday catch these vandals. Dena Serrato, who is part of the Beautification & Restoration committee, heads up an invasive plant removal group. Last November we brought in a group from our Boy Scout Stewardship program to work with Dena on buckthorn removal at Tenhave. A large amount of the small exotic tree from around the west entrance to the park was removed. We have been monitoring the area to see if it was successful or not. So far it looks as if our method will work.

Our speaker program's attendance was better than the year before, even with the May talk

being cancelled due to a power failure. We continue to have new people attending that have heard of us through many different sources. We seem to have been around long enough to have our schedules listed in many places; this of course is due mostly because of Ted Vickers' hard work on getting our information out. We have a great line up of speakers this season; come out and spend an evening with us. The nature walks have also had an increase in attendance. We tried something different this year, as several of the walks were hands-on programs. In February and March, we had attendees mark beech trees in Cummington to show the boundaries of the old Arkona Beach ridge and blue beech in Tenhave, showing the boundary of our wooded wetland. In May, we had a Pond Life program in Cummington; the enthusiasm and questions were fantastic. After five years of trying to capture crayfish in Cummington, we have we were successful. We found Digger Crayfish, which are listed on the Michigan DNR's list of "Species of Greatest Conservation Needs". We also learned that this spring we should have enough aquarium nets and viewing trays for everyone to be catching their own creepy crawlers.

Our "special nature walk program" which is offered to school groups, scout troops, neighborhood associations, garden clubs etc. has continued to grow in attendance. Kristine Hammond, who heads the education group, has a small group of volunteers offering our great Kindergarten program. Kristine hopes to add programs for other grades in the next few years. She also heads our popular Nature Night program that we offer to schools. Last winter she was unable to run this program, as she was finishing her student teaching and simply did not have the time. Kristine is now a biology teacher at Ferndale High School and has one-nature night scheduled for January and another in the planning stage. Our WEBELOS Scout forester badge program last fall drew large numbers and is a program we need to enlarge.

Our first five years have been a great start and the next five years will hopefully allow us to fully develop both parks into world-class outdoor nature classrooms. We are extremely lucky to have these high quality natural areas within Royal Oak. There is still a lot of work to do, but we will get there. Why not volunteer and lend a hand? Its fun and its enriching your community. Please join us.

## Visiting Deer BY ANN WILLIAMS

It's surprising to see a White-tailed deer, but in Royal Oak visiting our nature parks?

Is urban sprawl the reason why they are encroaching upon our parks for food and solace, or could it be predators? Cougars *were* spotted over the summer in Sterling Heights and

Farmington Hills.

Deer are creatures of habit. If unharmed, they follow the same routine, the same trails, day after day, shifting the pattern only because of weather conditions and the availability of food.

Someone told me that deer travel up and down the train tracks in search

of food. Maybe they have added us to their pattern? Well, we compiled three stories for you. If you see any more, email us. We always like to know what you see and enjoy.

**1. Last spring, while going to work, I saw a doe moving east across Woodward Ave. near the zoo.** – Jeff Vickers

**2. In July, in Tenhave Woods, I saw a doe south**

***of the fallen giant oak. It took off for the southeast part of the park as soon as I saw it, but I lost sight of it quickly because of all of the greenery.*** – Ted Vickers

**3. In August, I spotted a deer trying to jump over the fence into Tenhave Woods.** – Arlington Park resident

Report an injured deer or any animal to the Royal Oak Police Dept. by calling 248-246-3500.

credit: <http://www.kerrlake.com/deer/white3.htm>

## Fall Speaker Programs

### "Go ABC"

**December 7th** \* David McDonald is an accomplished local speaker and nature photographer. Along with his wife Elaine, they visited three special and quite different places with nature as their prime objective plus a few short stops in transition, closer to home, and between A, B and C. "A" is for Albuquerque, the gathering place for visiting central New Mexico's wintering Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese. "B" is for Bruce Peninsula in Lake Huron's Georgian Bay, searching out many wildflowers and ferns. "C" is for Carbondale, located in southern Illinois, where things seen were totally unexpected.

### "Red Run: The Ghost River of Royal Oak"

**January 4th** \* Learn from Bob Muller, Royal Oak Nature Society Naturalist, about the river that used to flow through our City and what lived there. Between the late 1920s and the mid 1960s it was buried. We still had one creek and fish here in the 1960s. It is now a ghost river but if you know what to look for you can still see signs of it throughout Royal Oak. Along with Red Run other ghost's old farm wood lots and ridges left by the glaciers will be touched on. After this talk your eyes will become a time

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**ALL SPEAKER PROGRAMS AND NATURE WALKS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO EVERYONE. PRE-REGISTRATION IS NOT REQUIRED.**

## General Meeting with Speaker Programs

Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. - Leo Mahany/Harold Meininger Senior/Community Center (3500 Marais)

Date	Program
Dec. 7th	Go ABC
Jan. 4th	Red Run: The Ghost River of Royal Oak
Feb. 1st	Local Amphibian Conservation in Progress

## Nature Walk Programs Meet at the park

Date	Day	Time	Location
Dec. 10th	Saturday	10:00 a.m.	Cummingston Park
Jan. 14th	Saturday	2:00 p.m.	Tenhave Woods
Feb. 4th	Saturday	2:00 p.m.	Cummingston Park

## Nature Walk Descriptions

Dogs are not allowed inside either Tenhave Woods or Cummingston Park. Wearing boots while in the parks is recommended during the winter months.

**December 10th:** Late Fall - Just before the beginning of winter come and see changes taking place in the woods.

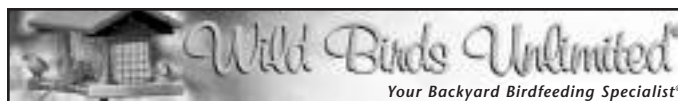
**January 14th:** Patterns - (Botanical-geography) looking at patterns of the plant communities to see what they can show us. We will be marking blue beech trees with surveyor tape. This will make it possible to look through the park and see the boundaries between the swamp forest and the upland forest. We did this last winter on the south wetland this year we will mark the north wetland.

**February 4th:** Patterns - (Botanical-geography) looking at patterns of the plant

communities to see what they can show us. We will be marking blue beech trees with surveyor tape. This will make it possible to look through the park and see the boundaries between the swamp forest and the upland forest.



Photo: Phil Myers



**28558 Woodward Avenue**  
**Royal Oak, MI 48067**  
**Owners: LuAnn & Steve Linker**  
**Phone: 248-548-2424**  
**Fax: 248-548-0917**  
**Email: wburoyaloak@aol.com**

## PARK PROBLEMS

If you are near or in one of our two nature parks and see or hear suspicious or unlawful behavior, please call the Royal Oak Police Department's non-emergency number, 248-246-3500 and inform them of the problem.

machine you will be able to see into the past almost wherever you look in Royal Oak.



### **“Local Amphibian Conservation in Progress”**

**February 1st** \* Edythe Sonntag, Senior Zookeeper at the Detroit Zoological Institute's National Amphibian Conservation Center, is presenting a program about the once common Blanchard's Cricket Frog (see photo above). It has declined to only two populations in southeastern Michigan in the last 10-15 years. The reason for this decline are many, but mostly related to a lack of appropriate habitat. With the support of the Detroit Zoo, graduate students are trying to answer some of the questions related to the natural history of this species. Translocating the frog from a rescue site to new locations in hopes of establishing new populations has allowed us to study habitat choice and behavior of this Michigan species of special concern.

Photo: John Sullivan/Ribbit Photography.com

## **Dream Cruise 2005** BY TED VICKERS

**O**ur second year of collecting parking fees during the Woodward Dream Cruise, has already come & gone. Because of all of the rain we had that day, we were not as successful as last year, but still came out with \$485 more than we had at the beginning of the day. Still, not bad for a day's work.

This year we increased the number of shifts from two to three, making it much easier on all of the volunteers. Ted Vickers and Jack Kerby handled the first shift (8 to 11). Jack got there before eight, and was surprised that cars started entering the Gunn Dyer parking lot before 8 a.m., even though there was plenty of free street parking available. Last year, it was 10 a.m.

before we got anyone into the park. It is anyone's guess why this year was different. At 11, Bob Muller & Kristine Hammond took over the collection duties along with the assistance of Leslie & Ila Schonberg who came of the way from Farmington Hills to help us out. At two o'clock, Tim Turner and Helen Cost took over the last shift along with help from Helen's husband, Connie, and Ann Holcomb. They finished up at five because street parking opened up again, and it was assumed that most people would park on the street instead of paying us the \$10. Next year if we get more volunteers, we might try to extend our stay beyond five to see how many more cars we can get to park at Gunn Dyer.

## **Why I Don't Hate The Dream Cruise Anymore** BY ANN HOLCOMB

**I** have always thought that one of the more boring things to do in life was to sit on Woodward Ave. and watch cars go by. It ranks right up there with watching the Indianapolis 500, political conventions, and most baseball games. Boring, boring, boring!

When Ted Vickers asked me to help park cars at the Dream Cruise for the Nature Society, I wasn't thrilled. I did say yes out of a sense of duty, but not because I thought it would be fun or interesting. I complained to all my friends about what a "dumb, stupid thing" I was going to do. I WAS WRONG! I had fun, and have already volunteered for next year, and have talked another member/friend into coming along with me. The people parking in "our" lot were friendly, smiling, and happy. It was very much a family affair with mom, pop, and several children in many of the cars. We

had a nice canopy to sit under to get us out of the sun and rain. And most importantly, there was a 'Johnny on the Spot' right on the corner. Both canopy and 'Johnny' were provided by the city of Royal Oak. Maybe best of all was the spiffy T-shirt that Royal Oak wanted all volunteers to wear. For those of you who hunt, you know what 'Hunter's Orange' is. For the rest of you, just know when I have it on, you can see me a mile away and in the dark. Next spring, when I take my new Gordon Setter puppy out in the field, I shall wear this T-shirt as my Hunter's Orange. All in all, it was a good afternoon. We made some money for the Nature Society, it wasn't hard work, we didn't get too wet, and I had fun. So next year, when Ted asks for volunteers, step up and join us. Who knows what color T-shirt we will get next year!

# Royal Oak's Wild Side

BY BOB MULLER

Most of late summer and early fall was consumed with the planning and building of Dragonfly Pond, Tenhave Woods' recently named vernal pond. Other than the pond, four things will be added to Tenhave Woods. The area along the pond edges will become filled with grasses and shrubs, an environment currently lacking in Tenhave. In the times of year the pond is dry, it will be a great place for bird watching. Already, we have enjoyed watching the park's Cooper and Red-tailed hawks from there. The logs from the trees that were cut down will become trail-lining material and provide many homes for our smaller wild things. The fourth item is brush piles made from the treetops. They should have an immediate impact on Tenhave.

Brush piles are piles of branches laid in a manor that they remain "fluffed up"; they do not collapse to the ground or rot for a number of years. These provide hiding places for animals like rabbits and also a place for them to escape from predators. It will be interesting to watch the snow around the brush this winter for tracks. We hope these will help to increase the rabbit population that is much lower than it should be in woods like Tenhave. Even as we

were cutting and moving the treetops for the brush piles, we saw several of our smaller mammals, mice. We undoubtedly have many mice but in five years these are the first I had seen. We should also attract wrens, warbler and other birds to these brush piles.

Late fall and early winter, before the snow covers things, is also a great time to see Tenhave's geological features. The sandbar trail is named after an offshore sandbar in Lake Warren. If you enter the park through the west turnstile, you can clearly see the ridge running through the park. One of the things that helps you see the ridge is botany. With very different tree species growing in the swamp forest and the upland forest, there is a different color of leaves on each forest floor, making the ridge stand out. Explore the park and become familiar with its topography.

I believe any time you walk through our Royal Oak forest, there will always be something new to discover. You simply have to look. Escape the developed world, take a breath, feel the stress fade away and take a walk in the woods. Check out Royal Oak's wild side.

## TENHAVE WOODS STEWARDSHIP CREW NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are needed to help with removing invasive buckthorn shrubs from Tenhave Woods. Buckthorn is a serious threat to the native plants in our nature preserves. We will be working on Saturday mornings in November. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Dena Serrato at 248-542-2820.



## Want to Join The Royal Oak Nature Society?

Please make checks out to:

**CITY OF ROYAL OAK  
MEMO: ROYAL OAK NATURE SOCIETY**

Mail completed form and donation check to:

**Royal Oak Nature Society  
1708 Northwood Blvd.  
Royal Oak, MI 48073**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**1-year membership rates: (Sept-Aug)**

Individual/Family: \$5.00

Supporting: \$10 and up

**Donations are tax deductible**

## NATURE SOCIETY TEAMS

Please contact us to become actively involved in one or more of our Teams.

**Beautification:** Tackles tasks as surveying the parks, defining & maintaining a trail system, park clean up & removing invasive species.

**Communications:** Provides publicity about organizational activities to the general membership & the public. It is also responsible for publishing this newsletter.

**Education:** Focuses its efforts on education outreach

programs that promote understanding and appreciation of the environment by involving children in our local parks and nature programs.

**Program:** Coordinates and schedules nature walks & nature oriented speaker programs, develop programs for outside organizations and catalog plants, trees & birds.

**Ways & Means:** Investigates means of fund raising and grant solicitation & then follows through accordingly.

### Board of Directors

President: **Tim Turner** 248-320-4819

Vice President: **John DeLisle** 248-585-9002

Treasurer: **Bob Guymer** 248-399-7042

Beautification & Restoration: **Jack Kerby** 248-879-8010

Communications: **Ted Vickers** 248-549-5366

Education: **Kristine Hammond** 248-577-5171

Program: **Bob Muller** 248-398-0195

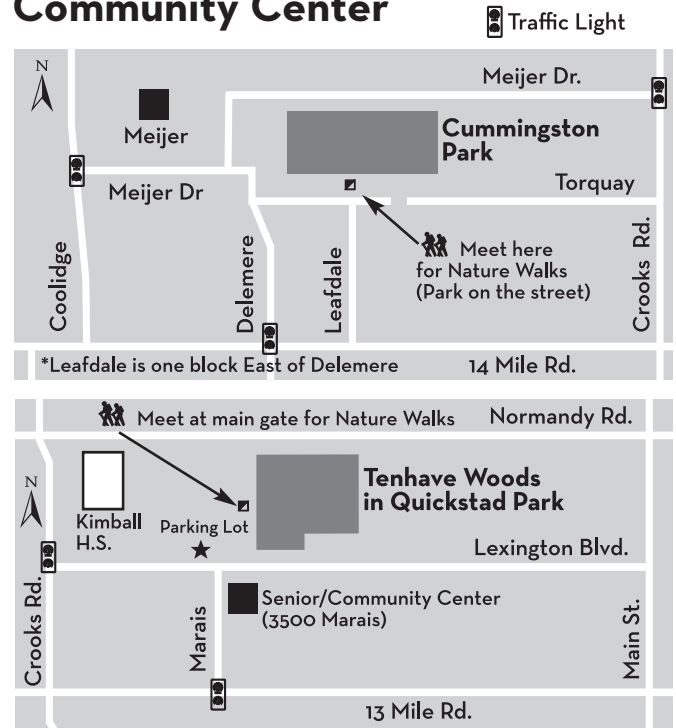
Ways & Means: **Helen Cost** 248-549-9423

### Newsletter

**Ted Vickers** tg1121@sbcglobal.net

**Ann Williams** ann.m.williams@comcast.net

## Our Nature Parks & Senior Community Center



To locate and print out Tenhave Woods & Cummington Park trail maps, please go to our web site (bottom of p.5), link on to **Park Locations** and then **Map for park trail**

FIRST CLASS MAIL

The Royal Oak Nature Society  
1600 N. CAMPBELL ROAD  
ROYAL OAK MI 48067

