



The Chinquapin

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Winter 2009/10

The Official Publication Of The Royal Oak Nature Society

NATURE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER FOR THE 2009/10 SEASON

To continue receiving our newsletter (beginning with the Spring 2010 edition), you need to be a paid-up 2009/10 Nature Society member.

Royal Oak Nature Society membership structure has changed. The membership season still begins in September and ends the following August. But now there are four membership levels. General Membership is free and with it, you get Nature Society schedule updates e-mailed to you at least once a month. Associate Membership cost \$5 per year and gets you the above benefit along with four newsletters, "The Chinquapin", mailed to your household quarterly. Supporting Membership is \$10 & up per year and gets you all of the above benefits plus e-mailed Tenhave Woods & Cummington park updates from our naturalist (Bob Muller) & our botanist (Don Drife). Patron Membership is \$50 & up per year and gets you all of the above benefits plus two private walks a year, listed as a patron in our Fundraiser Program & newsletter, invitation to

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What We Have Been Doing 2008/09

By Bob Muller & Ted Vickers

Here we are beginning our tenth year; much has been accomplished and much still needs to be done. Most of our effort has been at Tenhave Woods because when we started the Nature Society, Tenhave was in much better condition than Cummington, our other nature park. Cummington had major drainage problems that would have to wait. With that said, several major things have occurred there this past year. Jacob Vertel, a young man from Boy Scout Troop 1610, lead an Eagle Scout project to help build Crawfish Pond inside Cummington Park. Jacob not only supplied and managed the labor, but put on fundraisers to pay for the equipment rental needed to move dirt from the excavation. This dirt added a foot to over one hundred yards of a trail that was normally under several inches of water into the early summer. Crawfish Pond has become as inter-



Crawfish Pond excavation

esting as Dragonfly Pond (in Tenhave). The plants at Crawfish that have shown up the first year from the seed bed are amazing and different from what we have seen at Tenhave. Cardinal Flower has been seen in Cummington for the first time in years. In the ten years since the Society began, we had not seen or heard any amphibians in Cummington. But American Toads were found in Crawfish Pond the first year and now thousands of young toads are eating the mosquitoes. The pond also has produced many other insects that eat mosquitoes and for the first time in any of our memories, you can walk into Cum-

mingston in the summer without being eaten alive. We also were awarded money from block grants to continue our drainage work at Cummington (west side of the park). That work has not begun yet. It will still be many years until the park is up to the quality of Tenhave, but things have begun to happen.

Our first year with the speaker programs at the Middle School has been rocky. The Gathering Place, where we usually meet, was a loud room and many could not hear the speakers. We found we could use the school's audio equipment and this has solved that problem. The other item is the seats there are very uncomfortable, but we have noticed that many attendees are bringing cushions with them. Hopefully, more of our future programs can be held in the auditorium.

Our nature walk attendance has been really good this year. With 24 walks, we had the highest nature walk attendance ever with an average of over 20 people per walk! A big reason for this is that there has been a big increase in the number of children who are going on our walks. And the main reason for that is that the science

teachers in the Royal Oak Public School system are giving extra credit to those students who attend these walks. We want to thank those teachers who are emphasizing environmental science to their students and encouraging them to attend our programs.

Other extremely successful programs this year have been our 4th Annual Fundraiser (135 people), two Nature Nights (370 stu-

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dents/parents) and our 3rd Annual Open House (135 people total for all of our programs/walks that day).

The Botanical Garden/Arboretum we started behind the Senior/Community Center is slowly moving forward. We have cut out a large area of buckthorn and have begun limited planting. As with our ponds, the cleared area behind the Center had many plants in the seed base that had not been seen there for years. Blue Lobelia and Cardinal Flower are among many of the other wildflowers that showed up. Hopefully, this area will finish being cleared by next summer (2010) and we can begin to attract gardeners to help to plant and maintain the arboretum.



Arboretum area after buckthorn trees were removed

In Tenhave, the relocating of the north part of the Pond Trail was a great addition during the spring wildflower season. The new Fern Trail was built in June of 2008. Don Drife, our Nature Society botanist, lead his first fern walk on that trail in August, 2009. This walk will become a continuing part of our nature walk program. Both owl hoots and full moon walks are continuing to be popular programs. On one of our spring nature walks, we found some garter snakes (one male & one female) alongside one of the trails in Tenhave. Because it has been a real long time since any have been seen, it is possible they are present because there is now a good food source for them (American Toads). With one male & one female snake seen, there is a good chance that the garter snake popula-

tion might increase. This year it seemed like we didn't have any deer in Tenhave. This is a very good sign as the woods are simply not large enough to support a population of deer without the loss of our wildflowers. Wood Ducks were seen nesting and raising a family inside Tenhave.



A garter snake seen near one of the Tenhave trails

Although it has taken longer than we would have liked, we have finally moved forward with Nature Society lead field trips for the students in the Royal Oak Public School system. We just did our first field trip in May. Bob lead 60 Royal Oak High School students (3 groups) into Tenhave where the focus was on some earth science and the Cromwell farm that was once part of this land. Several meetings have occurred between the Royal Oak Public School teachers and us to determine how the Nature Society can partner with them to bring environmental science to their students. We are continuing to work on developing programs for all of the schools.

One of the most exciting items is that whenever we are in the park we see families and individuals walking the trails. The original goal in starting the Royal Oak Nature Society was to get people into the nature parks. Even though we serve over 1,500 people with our programs, the general public has discovered the two nature parks. With our good trail system, more people are using them. It will be interesting to see where the next ten years takes us.

(Membership continued from page 1)

our day before the Dream Cruise picnic at Gunn Dyer Park and one free ticket to our annual fundraiser.

Please check your address label to see if you are already paid-up through August 2010. If not, and you want to be an Associate, Supporting or Patron member, please fill out a membership form (page 5) and mail it along with a check to the Nature Society. Please list other household members you want included as Nature Society members (no extra cost).

Through your donation, you will be helping to cover the costs to produce our newsletter and will also be assisting

in funding educational programs that we provide. Donations are always tax deductible.

If you only want to be a General Member, please e-mail us the information asked for on our membership form (p.5) & send that information to: naturesociety@ci.royal-oak.mi.us.

Your membership whether General, Associate, Supporting or Patron, will help to strengthen this organization.

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.

NATURE SOCIETY T-SHIRTS

With December right around the corner, think holiday present. Nature Society T-shirts are now selling at \$4 per shirt. There are many large & medium size shirts available. They can be purchased at any of our speaker programs or contact us at 248-246-3380 or naturesociety@ci.royal-oak.mi.us to make arrangements to purchase one or more.

NATURE SOCIETY'S 5th ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

Our next annual fundraiser is scheduled for Friday, **April 16th, 2010** at the Royal Oak Elk's Club. Please SAVE THE DATE and get more details in our next newsletter (Spring 2010) and also from our website beginning in January, 2010.

WEBSITE CHANGE

If you have typed in our old website address lately, you will have noticed that you have been redirected to our new address. Our website design has also been changed to look like the City's new website. You can also go to the City's site & link on to the Nature Society or use our new URL which is now:
<http://www.ci.royal-oak.mi.us/portal/community-links/nature-society>

SPEAKER PROGRAMS

*Our monthly general meeting/speaker programs are held at the **Royal Oak Middle School** (formerly Dondero High School). The school is located at 709 N. Washington, between 11 Mile Road & Catalpa (11 ½ Mile). The meeting/program will be held in the "Gathering Place" or auditorium, both of which can be reached via the school's southeast entrance. Reference our Fall 2008 issue (can be found on our website) for a map showing the location of the school & entrance. At our monthly **Wednesday** meetings from September to June, we present speaker programs that are usually slide shows focusing on various natural history topics. If you watch nature programs on PBS or the Discovery Channel, this is better because you can meet with the speakers afterwards and ask questions. The general meeting begins around **7:25 pm**, with the speaker program following several minutes later.*

"Freshwater Mussels" is being presented on **December 2nd**. Come learn about the secret sex lives of North American mussels from Todd Crail, naturalist and PhD student at the University of Toledo. While there are approximately 300 species of mussels on the North American continent, over 70 percent are listed as "Of Concern". Included, is the local star of Mr. Crail's show, "The Snuffbox". In spite of its amazing life history, this mussel is listed as "Endangered by Michigan", and is now threatened by expansion of the European zebra and quagga mussels. Learn about the Snuffbox's natural history along with the fascinating life histories of other species, and all the factors that play into the success or demise of these unique organisms among North America's aquatic fauna.

"Costa Rica" is being held on **January 6th**. Join Pat and Ray Coleman, the Nature Society's very own professional nature photographers, for a trip to Costa Rica. Costa Rica is home to an amazing diversity of life; from sea level beaches and mangrove communities to mountain top Cloud Forests, and many other life zones in between. In some places plant life is so tightly packed that it is impossible to tell where one plant ends and another begins. Bird and insect life is equally rich and varied. Come and enjoy a visit to one of the world's prime naturalist travel destinations.

"Red Run" is being presented on **February 3rd**. Learn about the river that used to flow through Royal Oak and what lived in it from Bob Muller, Royal Oak Nature Society naturalist. Between the late 1920's and the mid 1960's, the river was buried underground. Royal Oak still had one creek with fish in it during the 1960's. The Red Run 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, ghost's of old farm woodlots and ridges left by the glaciers will be touched on. After this talk, your eyes will become a time machine as you will be able to see into the past almost wherever you look in Royal Oak.

"Orchids" is being held on **March 3rd**. The Orchid Family is the largest family of flowering plants. They occur on every continent except Antarctica. There are 55 species currently growing in Michigan. Don Drife, Nature Society botanist, grew up in an orchid hunting family and has been studying and photographing orchids in Michigan for many years. He took his first orchid picture 35 years ago and has spent time in the field studying natural history with people like Walter Nickel, Paul Thompson, and George Thomson. Don and his wife, Joyce, pursue orchids together. Come and join Don to learn what makes orchids unique among flowering plants and what habitats they can be found in. This talk will highlight the diversity of orchid species that occur in Michigan.

TENHAVE WOODS STEWARDSHIP

If you are interested in stewardship opportunities at Tenhave Woods, please contact Dena Serrato at 248-542-2820 or oldtoolgirl@yahoo.com for more information.

PROBLEMS IN THE PARKS

If you are near or in one of our two nature parks (Tenhave Woods or Cummington Park) and see or hear suspicious or unlawful behavior, please help by calling the Royal Oak Police Department's non-emergency number, 248-246-3500 and inform them of the problem. Dogs are not allowed in either of our nature parks.



SMOKE FREE FUNCTIONS

The Nature Society Board of Directors has adopted a resolution that all of our programs are smoke free including all functions of the Royal Oak Nature Society (indoors or outdoors). We are committed to protect the health of everyone who attends any of our programs.



NATURE WALKS

There is at least one walk per month with more per month added during the spring wild-flower and fall color seasons. An emphasis is put on understanding the different forest types found in our parks. Further information is given on individual plant and animal species, also the geology and human history of the area. Wearing boots while in the parks is recommended in the winter & spring months. Using insect repellent and dressing appropriately is advised from late spring to the end of summer.

CUMMINGSTON PARK: Park & meet at Leafdale & Torquay

TENHAVE WOODS: Park in lot at Marais & Lexington Blvd. and meet at the Lexington entrance (300 feet east of parking lot). For the "Owl Hoots" & "Full Moon Walk", park & meet at Marais/Lexington Blvd parking lot.

"**Late Fall Nature Walk**" is being held at **Tenhave Woods** on Sunday, **December 6th** at **2:00 pm**. They say you can't see the forest for the trees, but it is the leaves that hide the shape of the land. Come and see what is revealed about the land of Tenhave Woods.

"**Winter Nature Walk**" is being held at **Tenhave Woods** on Saturday, **January 16th** at **2:00 pm**. The winter forest is the easiest time to see signs of wildlife (tracks, bird and squirrel nest etc.). Bring binoculars for the birds and we will be keeping an eye out for mammals.

"**Owl Hoots**" are being held at **Tenhave Woods** on Tuesday, **January 19th**, Wednesday, **February 17th** and Thursday, **March 18th**. They will all begin at **7:30 pm**. We will walk into Tenhave Woods and attempt to lure in or have screech & great

horned owls answer tape recordings of their calls.

"**Looking For the Largest Trees**" is being held at **Tenhave Woods** on Saturday, **February 13th** at **2:00 pm**. Join us for a search for the largest trees in Tenhave

"**Full Moon Walk**" is being held on Sunday, **February 28** beginning **7:30 pm** at **Tenhave Woods**. Experience the woods at a time of day that the park is normally closed. You never know what you may hear and see when the light levels are low. Bring a small flashlight.

"**Spring Equinox Walk**" is being held at **Tenhave Woods** on Saturday, **March 20th** at **10:00 am**. Join us on the first day of spring. We will be looking for the first signs of the reawakening of the Tenhave plant community.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

The Royal Oak Nature Society, in conjunction with the City of Royal Oak, has received a portion of Royal Oak's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for 2009/10. The funding is for drainage and barrier-free improvements at Cummington Park.

In November 2006, a ditch running alongside Leafdale Trail was deepened. That project helped to decrease the flood-

ing in northern part of the park, but the western section still has flooding problems due to the urban development around it.

This new funding will allow work to be done that will help alleviate the flooded conditions in this section, by installing conduits through the natural barriers that prevent proper drainage, as well as provide barrier-free use.

NATURE SOCIETY DIRECTOR OPENINGS

The following volunteer board positions are open:

The Education Director focuses on education outreach programs that promote understanding and appreciation of the environment by involving children with our local parks and nature programs. The Fundraiser Director coordinates and organizes the Annual Spring Fundraiser and other fund-raiser programs approved by the board. If you are interested in volunteering for either of these positions, please contact Ted Vickers at either 248-549-5366 or naturesociety@ci.royal-oak.mi.us

2009 Dream Cruise Wrap Up

We had another good year, with around 300 cars being parked at Gunn Dyer Park the evening before the Dream Cruise and on Dream Cruise Day (Saturday, August 15) itself. The weather was pretty cooperative again this year. It didn't rain, even though it was a little bit on the hot side.

The Nature Society wants to thank the following people for volunteering their time at this year's Dream Cruise: Bob Muller, Ann Bobiney, Amanda Felk, Ted Vickers, Ann Holcomb, Don & Joyce Drife, Bonnie Michalak, Mitzi Hoffman, Ann Holcomb, Wendy Erzen, Holly Forrester and Helen & Connie Cost. Without their help, we would not have been able to operate the parking lot. Also a big thanks Greg Rassel & his crew for getting the park ready for us.

Once a year, this becomes an easy way for the Nature Society to make some money. The city of Royal Oak sets everything up and all we have to do is collect the



Ann Bobiney giving directions on where to park

entry fee and direct people to available parking spots. Hopefully, when Dream Cruise rolls along next year, you might consider joining our volunteer crew for a few hours to help the Nature Society collect a few bucks that will help pay for future expenses/projects.

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Royal Oak Nature Society Membership Form

Please make check out to: **Royal Oak Nature Society**
 MEMO: Membership

Mail completed form & check to:
Royal Oak Nature Society
 1600 N. Campbell Rd.
 Royal Oak, MI 48067

Names (individual/household members): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

1 Year Membership (September-August)

- General (free)
- Associate (\$5)
- Supporting (\$10 & up)
- Patron (\$50 & up)

NATURE SOCIETY TEAMS

Please contact us if you would like to become actively involved with one or more of our teams:

Communications: Publicizes organizational activities to the general membership and public through various mediums and performs any other forms of communications required by the board.

Education: Provides outreach and liaison to outside individuals, groups and schools to promote environmental education.

Fundraising: Is responsible for the fund-raising efforts of the Nature Society, which includes the coordinating and organizing of the Annual Spring Fundraiser & other fund-raiser programs approved by the board.

Programming: Is responsible for setting up the speaker programs, workshops and all of the nature programs within Cummingston Park and Tenhave Woods.

Stewardship: Maintains a trail system and enhances the overall park experience at Tenhave Woods & Cummingston Park.

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Don Drife (248-528-0479)

Vice President & Cummingston Park Stewardship: John DeLisle (248-585-9002)

Treasurer & Ways & Means: Helen Cost (248-549-9423)

Recording Secretary: Nancy Vickers (248-549-5366)

Tenhave Woods Stewardship: Dena Serrato (248-542-2820)

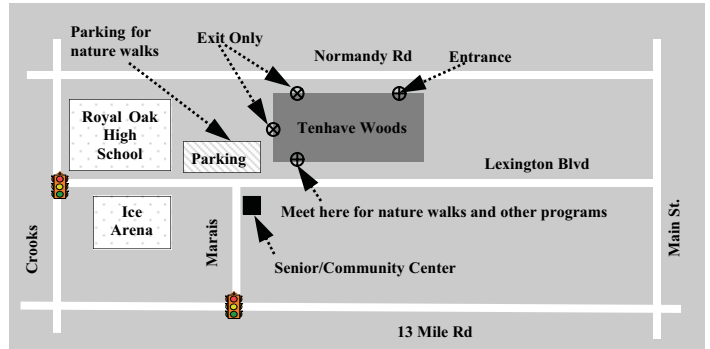
Communication & Education (acting): Ted Vickers (248-549-5366)

Program: Bob Muller (248-398-0195)

Newsletter: Ted Vickers

Engineer: Richard Stoll

Royal Oak Nature Parks



To locate and print out Tenhave Woods & Cummingston Park trail maps, please go to our web site (listed below under our tree logo), link on to "Park Locations" and then "Map for park trail locations"

The Royal Oak Nature Society is a nonprofit education and stewardship group working within the city of Royal Oak's two nature parks, Tenhave Woods and Cummingston Park. Our mission is to foster awareness and usage of these two natural areas. We accomplish this by providing stewardship for the continuing improvement and maintenance of them plus we offer a wide range of natural history educational programs.

The Royal Oak Nature Society
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