

# The Chinquapin | 'chi[ng] -ki-"pin |

The official Publication of

## The Royal Oak Nature Society

A volunteer group working to protect and promote Royal Oak's nature preserves, while enjoying and sharing environmental education with the community

248.246.3380

[www.ci.royal-oak.mi.us/nature/](http://www.ci.royal-oak.mi.us/nature/)

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

by Bob Muller

The Royal Oak Nature Society was started to provide Nature Programs for the public in our two great nature parks. The parks had both been saved by the city as nature preserves but for many years no organized use of them had existed. In our first year, we had nature walks and a speakers program, running from March to May. It was a test and it worked, people came. The Royal Oak Nature Society was off and running. We are now nearing the end of our third year of providing nature programs in Tenhave Woods and Cummingston Park. I thought it would be interesting to look at what has been accomplished and what remains to be done.

This season we offered 17 nature walks and two special bird walks. Our attendance is up 40% on these walks. Hopefully next year we will add to the nature walks several workshops. At these workshops we will teach something (such as tree identification or pond study) followed by a walk in Tenhave Woods to test out newly developed skills. The speakers series, our most popular program, has seen an increase in attendance of over 50%. Hopefully this upward trend will continue next year. We are hard at work trying to line up interesting speakers for next season. If anyone knows of a speaker or would like us to find a speaker on a certain subject matter, please contact me.

We have been very lucky in that several Boy Scouts, working on their Eagle rank, have approached us for their Eagle projects. To obtain the rank of Eagle, a scout must do a project for Church or community. This project is to show his

management skills. It must involve approximately 100 hours of work by a team directed by the scout. The Nature Society has benefited greatly from this. Andrew Mast of Troop 1629 built a new trail in Tenhave Woods and lined the old trails with logs. James Hutton of Troop 1610 rebuilt the Spicebush, Gentian and Meadow trails in Cummingston Park. He also hacked down the jungle of grape vines in the old meadow. This was so large a task that the Nature Society had no idea how or when we could accomplish it. Steve Ech also of Troop 1610 built and installed three wood duck houses and five wren houses for Tenhave Woods and we have seen wood ducks in the park this spring. Steve also built the same for Cummingston Park with the addition of two bluebird houses. Wolf Den I of Cub Pack 1631 built three bat houses for Tenhave Woods. Chris Riggs of Troop 1601's project has been helping our pre-settlement forest project. He has been recording every tree by species in Dondero, Meininger and Wagner parks. His efforts should help us determine the structure of the forest in Royal Oak before development. Chris McFadden of Troop 1629 is planning a project for this fall to help us finish the trails in Tenhave Woods. With all this help from the Scouts we plan to name a trail in Tenhave the Eagle trail and one in Cummingston the Scout trail.

Jack Kerby, head of the beautification committee, has been hard at work. His crew of volunteers has removed the old over grown honeysuckles from the entrance of Cummingston Park. The growth was so bad that you almost had to crawl

under the shrubs to enter the park. The entrance is now very inviting. It hasn't looked this good since the 1970's. Jack's crew continued the grape vine removal started by Eagle Scout Jim Hutton, but the task is huge and ongoing. We hope to see some of the meadow plants that were in the park thirty years ago come back. Maybe we will have some fall wild flowers for our September October nature walks.

Kristine Hammond, our Education Chairman, is hard at work setting up more "School Nature Nights". We have already had two, one at Whittier school and one at the Boys and Girls Club. They were both well received and we wish to expand the program. Kristine is also beginning to work with some teachers to see how the Nature Society can be of help in our schools. If this isn't enough to keep her busy, she is now in charge of our bird list. She will be recording the birds seen in the parks and starting a list of those we have seen nesting in both parks.

Richard Stoll, a friend of the parks, has repaired the bird feeder in Tenhave, which had seen thirty years of vandalism. The Jaycees and the Royal Oak chapter of the Women's Farm and Garden club donated the feeders, which were built in the Kimball metal shop back in 1979. Richard straightened the bent feeder as best he could and reinforced it with heavy steel. He designed a new door that becomes a chute when opened to pour in the 50 pounds of seed the feeder takes. In June the vandals struck again cutting off the lock and smashing the door. Richard is repairing it and we hope to have it in service for this fall and winter.

Don and Joyce Drife have completed the first year's study of plant succession around the old fallen oak. The report on what has been happening appeared in the last Chinquapin. Major changes have occurred in just one summer of sunlight and already this spring changes can be seen. The Drifes are continuing the update our Flora list and we have passed the 300 mark in the plant species recorded in the parks. I have often stated on nature walks in Cummingston that Don knew the exact date bloodroot went extinct in the park. When in high school, Don watched a city truck dump yards of wood chips on the only known stand. I am happy to report that we found another stand of bloodroot in the park. It was in seed, so hopefully it will spread. Keep your eyes open maybe you can add to our list.

Dr. Kevin Zipple of the Detroit Zoo has started a study on why we seem to have no amphibians breeding in either park. We walked both parks together and the habitat looked good. He has had his people do a water chemistry test. We have found several chemicals in higher concentrations than we think is normal. This may be why we find no tadpoles. More study is necessary to determine our problems and if we can return frogs, toads and salamanders to the parks.

Great successes, but all is never perfect. Along with the bird feeder damage, problems still occur. Even though we have signs saying "no dogs in the nature areas" at both parks, many dog owners pay no attention. This is not a new rule, as dogs were not permitted in either of the parks and it was clearly posted for over thirty years. We tried for a year to ask dog owners to keep their dogs on leash to no avail. We have lost almost all the rabbits and have seen no sign of ground nesting bird in the parks. We have more rabbits in most Royal Oak neighborhoods than in our nature parks. At Cummingston the no dog signs are generally stolen within twenty-four hours of being put up. Also at Cummingston, people trying to inform dog owner of the fact that dogs are not allowed are often threatened and talked to with very rude language. Tenhave Woods has a continuing problem of vandals removing the logs that line the trails, so it is a continuing effort to replace them. We have also had a large increase in the paint ball wars going on in the parks. Aside from the above-mentioned vandalism we still have flooding problems in Cummingston. The city installed an auxiliary drain on the north side of the park but the low water levels caused from three years of drought have not given us the ability to evaluate whether it works or not. This year's water level in Cummingston is about at the natural level, but Tenhave is drier than any of us can remember. Last year in Tenhave we noticed some large beech trees showing great distress from lack of water in the fall. The above problems must be solved or we will never be able to get to the goal of these parks: becoming world-class nature teaching facilities.

All in all, I feel that we have made great progress. The parks regularly have people enjoying them in the manner that they were created for. Word of our programs is spreading. At our Saturday June nature walk, we even had a person from Canada. He had found us on the Internet and was pleased and surprised at the quality of our urban nature preserve.

## Changing Plant Communities...Update

In the last issue of the Chinquapin, we published a wanted list of plants for the nature parks. We have found bindweed, maple-leaved viburnum, red-osier dogwood, both species of virginia creeper, and bloodroot. A small clump of bloodroot with 14 stems was found for the first time since 1971 in Cummingston. Gooseberry, white-sweet clover, and touch-me-not have been recorded from Tenhave Woods. We have found 12 new species this year making a total of 318 species recorded in the two nature parks. 229 are from Cummingston and 260 from Tenhave Woods.

## New Board Member--Helen Cost

Helen Cost has volunteered to help the Royal Oak Nature Society in its mission to "improve the natural management of our (Royal Oak) parklands, so they become vibrant spaces in the community". She has agreed to take on the proposal writing for potential grants, and will head up the Ways and Means Committee. Helen has lived in Royal Oak for 36 years and has been a participant in several walks and meetings of the society. Helen retired from DaimlerChrysler in 2000, and served as a Program Manager in Engineering for Vehicle Interiors, the Viper, and Battery development for Electric and Hybrid Vehicles.

Helen and her husband, Connie, have two grown sons and two grandchildren. Her personal interests are boating, reading, photography, flowers, and perennial gardens.

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## Membership Fee

Beginning in September, the Royal Oak Nature Society is asking for a minimum \$5 donation for membership for an individual or family. This will cover the printing and mailing of the Chinquapin. A donation of \$10 or more will make you a supporting member. Not only will this cover our newsletter cost, but it will help to fund educational programs that we provide. Those who choose not to continue as members are invited to continue to attend our monthly speakers program as well as the nature walks. Those are and always will be free to anyone who enjoys learning about nature. To join or continue to be a member please fill out the following form.

### Went 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:

1600 N. Campbell Road  
Royal Oak, MI 48067

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

1-year membership rates: (September ~ August)

Individual/Family: \$5

Supporting: \$10 and up

Owners: LuAnn & Steve Linker  
Phone: (248) 548-2424  
Fax: (248) 548-0917

### **General Meeting with Speaker Programs**

7:00 p.m. - Leo Mahany/Harold Meininger Senior / Community Center

**September 3, "Michigan Fishes"** - A Slide show of Michigan's hard to see dwarf fishes.  
**Speaker: Bob Muller - Royal Oak Nature Society Naturalist**

**October 1, "Folklore and Mythology of the Trees"** - A look at the stories and uses behind trees throughout history. **Speaker: Dan Kurkowski, Forester for the City of Detroit**

**November 5, "Wild Flowers and Mushrooms"** - A look at wild flowers & mushrooms through the eyes of professional photographers. **Speaker: Ray and Pat Coleman, Professional Nature Photographers**

### **Nature Walk Programs**

Meet at the park

**September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (Saturday at 10:00 a.m.)** - Tenhave Woods. Topic: Back to the woods.

**October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (Saturday at 10:00 a.m.)** - Cummington Park. Topic: Fall Color.

**October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.)** - Tenhave Woods in Quickstad Park. Topic: Fall Color.

**October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (Saturday at 10:00 a.m.)**- Tenhave Woods in Quickstad Park. Topic: Fall Color.

**November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003 (Saturday at 10:00 p.m.)**- Cummington Park.

**December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (Saturday at 10:00 a.m.)**- Tenhave Woods in Quickstad Park. Topic: Big Trees.

### **Our Parks**

Tenhave Woods at Quickstad park

Cummington Park

### **Newsletter Staff:**

Heather J. Muller (Editor) \* Ted Vickers \* Gretchen Greenwood

### **Royal Oak Nature Society-- Board of Directors:**

President - Heather J. Muller (248.546.4184)

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