

The Chinquapin

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*The Official Publication of
The Royal Oak Nature Society*

www.ci.royal-oak.mi.us/nature/index.html



First Nature Night a Success!

The Education committee did a great job of helping Whittier Elementary celebrate "Turn off Your Television Week" by holding a Nature Night on Friday, April 20th. Hands-on nature based activities filled the gym and families roamed from exhibit to exhibit learning about nature.



Scout Troop 1627 had tree rings to show how fast and slow different kinds of trees grow.



Nature Society members had microscopes with swamp water from Tehave Woods, a listening workshop on the birds of Royal Oak, free stuff and a raffle from the DNR and Oakland County Parks, a craft table to make flowers, a slide show on wildflowers, and an exhibit on fossils.

It was a great night for both kids and members to enjoy environmental education in our community. If you have something you could share with the kids or would like to just help out in future Nature Nights, contact the Nature Society.



Member Highlight

Name: Derek Blount

Occupation: Engineer for Ameritech for 20 years

Volunteer Work

- Past President and current Legislative Chair for the North Country Trail Association. Derek has been active with this organization for 20 years. The 4600 mile trail system runs from upstate New York to North Dakota. In Michigan, this trail runs across the upper-lower peninsula. Derek has personally built and maintained a fifteen-mile section of this trail in Wilderness State Park in Mackinaw City. He was responsible for reorganizing the association, creating a headquarters, and establishing 25 chapters.
- Vice-President for the National Partnership for National Trail Systems. Derek sits on this board that is the umbrella organization for 22 national trails including the Appalachian and Continental Divide trails.
- Boys Scouts of America District Advancement Committee. Derek began his Scouting career in 1953 as a Cub Scout. Today he is responsible for reviewing local Eagle Projects.

Favorite Outdoor Activity: Hiking

Message from the President

Well, this has been a busy time for the Royal Oak Nature Society. We just had the Master Plan approved by the City Commission, we ran our Spring Nature Walk Program and we are getting started working on our trails. Thanks to some very nice articles in the local papers and Insight, we are seeing a lot of new faces at the Speaker Programs as well as the Nature Walks. The word is definitely getting out about us and we are thrilled by the amount of interest!

Some of the things that our Board and Committees have been working on:

Communication:

- New club flyer
- Newsletter

Beautification:

- Starting the Trails
- Buying Trail Signs
- Removing Invasive Species

Program:

- Spring Nature Walks
- Speaker Programs
- Special Nature Programs for other groups

Education:

- Whittier Nature Night
- Schoolyard Habitat Program

Ways & Means:

- Applying for Grants

We are lucky to have a great bunch of volunteers helping to get all these plans up and running. We really appreciate all the hard work and invite anyone else to help who might be interested. Speaking of which, last month we welcomed Kristine Hammond as a new board member in charge of Education. We are excited to have her join us and can't wait to start working with her. Thanks to George Aldea, who is stepping down from that position, to dedicate more time to our invasive species project.

Plans for this summer include working on our trails (see related article) and two Wednesday evening Nature Walks. Please see the Calendar. We will also conduct additional nature walks for small groups. If you have a group that is interested, please contact us through our email at naturesociety@ci.royal-oak.mi.us.

Heather

Trails

How many of you have walked into Tenhave Woods and lost track of the trail? The approximately 25 acres seem much larger and overwhelming when you are disoriented on the trail system. By the end of summer, we hope to solve this problem at Tenhave Woods and Cummingston Park. The recent approval of the Master Plan allows the Nature Society to start physical improvements at the parks and one of our first priority is defining the trail systems.

Leading the trail building project with Jack Kerby (Beautification) is member and local resident Derek Blount (See the Member Highlight). With over 20 years of experience, Derek's expertise will lead us through the process of building a solid foot trail system that is inexpensive, environmentally friendly, easy to maintain, and wheelchair accessible.

All trails will be hard-packed dirt. They'll be smooth and will drain well. These are the types used on National Trails throughout the country. "Other materials such as gravel, wood chips, or asphalt don't make sense," says Derek "From cost, maintenance, and aesthetics, you can't beat a well-made dirt trail".

At one point the City looked into creating asphalt trails for Tenhave. A cost in the tens of thousands of dollars, possible heavy equipment damage, and use of an oil-based product in a sensitive natural area didn't make sense. In contrast, the dirt trails will cost approximately \$3,000, will be done by hand, and will not expose the area to harmful chemicals.

The current trails will be reduced to 4-foot wide and lined with timbers from the woods. Outside of the timbers, where the current path used to be, will be raked and natural plants restored. Any area that is low and wet will be "turnpiked." This is a technique where a layer of soil is taken out and sand or gravel is placed down. The black-woven tarps that are used in creating roads are placed down; this porous fabric will allow for drainage. The tarp is then covered back up with the topsoil and compressed down. Derek estimates that this process should take 12 people a half-day to complete for each park. At Cummingston Park, a more extensive drainage plan will accompany the trail drainage.

The trails will have light to medium use so the maintenance is minimal. Besides restoring places where it is not level and using garden clippers to trim back any plants that may creep onto the trail, there is not much else that needs to be done. The Nature Society plans on implementing Trail Inspectors for each park. Trail Inspectors would walk the trails on a regular basis cutting back plants and notifying the Beautification Committee of any problems.

Hey Kids Join the Kids Earthsavers Club

The Earthsavers Club is an auxiliary group to the Nature Society for kids 4 and up! Our goal is to help save the earth by taking care of it! We will help clean up the parks, plant gardens, and of course meet new friends and play!

Join us on Sunday, June 9 at the play structure behind the Senior/Community Center at 2:00 p.m. We'll play for a while and then head into the adjacent woods with our naturalist, Mr. Bob. We'll learn about the woods, help clean up the trails, and talk about how kids can make a difference! Call 546-5783 for more information. No registration is needed. Please wear boots and gloves. In case of rain, we will reschedule this event.

Help Wanted!

The Beautification committee is removing invasive species growth from Tenhave Woods and Cummingston Park. We need volunteers to help remove these nasty plants. We will work in pairs and will begin when we have enough volunteers. Please contact George Aldea at 288-0331 or aldeageo@aol.com.

The Ways and Means committee is looking for volunteers who have an interest in writing grant proposals and organizing fund-raising events. Experience is helpful but not necessary. Volunteer time would only consist of a few hours each month and would count as MSUE Master Gardener and Master Woodland Manager hours. Please contact Dena Serrato at 248-542-2820 if you are interested. Thanks!

Letter to the Nature Society

Dear Royal Oak Nature Society Board:

I attended the Master Plan Public Hearing tonight and was very impressed with what I heard and saw. You are all to be commended for your efforts to protect Tenhave Woods at Quickstad Park, and Cummingston Park, and to educate local residents about the importance of these natural areas. These areas were described as natural islands or oases at the Public Hearing. They are that, and more. They are museums of a vast native landscape that once covered Michigan, most of it being forested before European settlement. For many of the native woodland plant species in these two parks, it is reasonable to expect that they are remnant populations, descended of the same original local gene pools that inhabited the Royal Oak area since post-glacial times, thousands of years ago. These are indeed ancient treasures and a heritage very worthy of preservation. While there might be some debate regarding regional genetic variation of species, personally, I like to think that when I walk through a natural area, I am seeing the descendant populations of plants that have been there for centuries. Maybe Alexis de Toqueville stopped to look at the ancestors of these same plants during his journey up through the area in 1831. Relict gene pools aside, few people understand that most of the species in these little forest patches occur nowhere else but mature, relatively undisturbed woodland. They do not understand that when forest is cleared and developed, nearly all of the associated species are excluded and never return without propagation from surrounding forests, if that were possible on pavement and lawn. Given that extremely little of Royal Oak and the surrounding area remains forested, there is almost no chance that forest species of any significance would ever return to Cummingston Park or Tenhave Woods once eliminated from these areas. Based on the Oakland County Soil Survey, it appears that the percentage of landscape remaining forested in the area is in the low single-digit range, with Cummingston Park, Tenhave Woods, and a strip along the Rouge River appearing to be nearly the only areas remaining, except for a few other very small spots. Further, few people recognize the degradation to forest habitat, and subsequently to forest species, resulting from fragmentation. Cummingston and Tenhave have been degraded enough and it's high time that these forests receive the attention you are giving them.

Thank you,
William Collins

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Huron Ecologic provides wetland delineations, wetland permitting, wetland mitigation design & monitoring, tree inventories, botanical & ecological surveys, natural area protection, nature education, and technical training.

Summer Schedule – Everyone Welcome!

General Meeting with Speaker Programs

Our Speaker Series and General Membership Meeting resumes in September! We hope you enjoyed all the great speakers we had this past year. Mark your calendar for the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Senior/Community Center for more nature-based lectures.



Nature Walk Programs

7:00 p.m. – Meet at the park

June 12 (Wednesday) – Tenhave Woods at Quickstad Park
August 7 (Wednesday) – Cummington Park



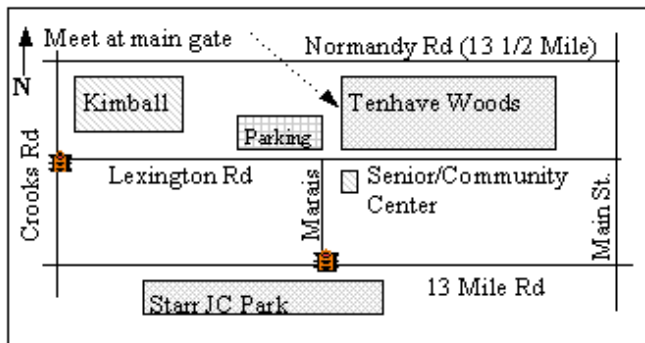
Of Interest to Nature Lovers

June 9 – Earthsavers Club (see article on page 3): Play Time & Nature Program
2:00 p.m. @ Senior/Community Center
June 10 – Royal Oak Garden Club: Lecture on Butterflies –
7:00 p.m. @ Royal Oak Library
July 8 – Royal Oak Garden Club: Members Garden Tour –
\$10 Annual Membership Fee Contact Rose 248-288-4380

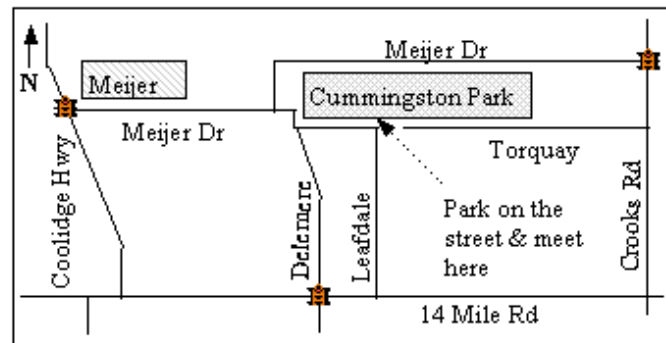


Our Parks

Tenhave Woods at Quickstad Park



Cummington Park



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