

**Newsletter of the Gahagan Nature Preserve, Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 421, Roscommon, MI 48653 989-275-3217 GahaganNature.org**  
**Issue #22 Spring 2012**

## **Some Elaboration on the Stories**

Gahagan Board

Spring has arrived, the Preserve is blooming and before you get reading the meat of the newsletter, let's elaborate on some of its details.

Gahagan Preserve received a number of donations this past year and we are so thankful. Our environmental education programs are Gahagan's heart. Each year hundreds of area school children tramp to the Preserve for Tom Dale's special classes. It is no secret that our State funded schools are struggling to make ends meet. School field trips cost money, and for the most part, school field trips have disappeared as part of our children's education experience. Gahagan charges schools a small amount for their visits but most of our cost is subsidized through grants, Marguerite's endowment and ... your donations, large and small.

In the winter, Tom travels to classrooms, presenting a different nature topic each year. Kirtland Community College funds a large share of this endeavor and we wish to acknowledge this wonderful partnership.

Tracy Bosworth took on the organizing of our ELF program this winter. ELF provides natural science resources to teachers for use in their classrooms. You can read more about this later in this issue. Many in the

area know Tracy as a retired middle school teacher and as a board member of Gahagan. Tracy is efficient and conscientious; two traits critical for teachers, parents or volunteers that use the ELF resources.

We thought winter was gone – or maybe that it never came this year – then the March storm hit. For those of you out of the area, it was a weird one. A foot of the heaviest, densest snow possible fell in a few hours. It bent the fir and pine over and as it accumulated on the leaning tops or limbs – snap! A large percentage of the smaller conifers suffered major damage. High winds and the snow weight up-rooted many more. We lost a couple giant cedars. Four trees leaned against the cabin. One of the deer exclosure demonstration areas took a hit. An electrical brown-out shorted the cabin's furnace controller. And the trails – there was hardly a passable section – if you could tell where the trail had existed! The total volunteer-hours need to clean the mess of trees exceed two weeks.

This brings us to a necessary topic. Gahagan Preserve is a volunteer effort. We pay a small amount to our educators to bring a professional experience when teaching children. The administration and upkeep of the preserve comes from volunteer labor. Newsletters, a website and a blog help keep you informed. Money must be banked, bills paid and contributions acknowledged. The buildings and grounds must be managed and cleaned. Volunteer time does this. We need more volunteer help. Please consider.

We have worked for over a year on a book about Marguerite Gahagan. You can find a short article about this later

## **Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve Board of Directors - 2012**

A 503(c) non-profit organization whose mission is to protect the balanced habitat that supports a wide-variety of plant and animal species.

Chairperson: Jeff Mellgren  
Vice Chair: Tracy Bosworth  
Secretary: Bobbie Werle 275-4031  
Treasurer: Brian Hutchins 275-4658

Julie Borak  
Joanne Bouck  
Troy Fairbanks  
Jeremy Jones  
George Maroney  
Richard Silverman

Tom Dale, Education Director 275-8206  
thdale@core.com

[www.GahaganNature.org](http://www.GahaganNature.org)  
[info@gahagannature.org](mailto:info@gahagannature.org)

## **2012 Gahagan Schedule**

**April 21:** Cabin & Grounds Clean Up 9:00 am-1:00 pm  
**May 1 - June 8:** School Field Trips  
**May 17-20:** Tawas Point Birding Festival, [tawasbirdfest.com](http://tawasbirdfest.com)  
**May 16:** Business Expo; CRAF Center 3-7 pm  
**May 18\*:** Preserve Walk 5:00 pm at the Cabin  
**May 30:** Annual MGNP Bird Count 8:00 am-12:00 at the Preserve  
**June 2:** Watershed River Day 1:00pm – 5:00 at KCC  
**Aug 18:** AuSable River Festival; Downtown Roscommon  
**July 17 - 19:** Nature Camp 9 am – 12:00 at the Preserve  
**July 19:** Family Night: Wonders of Weasels - 7 PM  
**Aug 18:** AuSable River Festival; Downtown Roscommon; Conservation Expo, Houghton Lake  
**Aug 18:** Conservation Expo, Houghton Lake  
**September 8:** Watershed River Day 10 am at Gates Lodge, Stephan Bridge  
**September 10:** Fall School field Trips begin.  
**September 16:** Open House 1:00-5:00 pm, Recognition Program at 2:00.  
**October 8:** General Membership Meeting 7:00 pm at the Cabin

\* The Kirtland Warbler Festival has been discontinued but Gahagan Preserve will still hold its preserve walk - long park of the festival.

Board of Directors meet on the 2nd Monday at 7:00 pm  
Everyone is Welcome to attend.

For up-to-date schedule, changes and event details visit [www.GahaganNature.org](http://www.GahaganNature.org).

Get alerts and updates through our Twitter feed located at [@gahagannature](https://twitter.com/gahagannature).

## **2011-12 Honor Roll Donations and Memorials**

The Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve thanks the following organizations and individuals that kindly donated to our mission during 2011 and early 2012.

**5th Street Market - Jeannie & John Bennick**

**Claudio Agnello & Patricia Blackburn**

**Dept of Natural Resources - Parks Division Employees**

**Hazel Babcock**

**Trish Baerlocher**

**Bob & Julie Borak**

**Sharon & Sherwood Bouderman**

**Gary & Sharon Boushelle in honor of family & friends**

**Julie Boushelle**

**Elizabeth & William Burrows**

**Martha Clapp in memory Richard Clapp**

**Cowell Family Fund**

**Phylis & Tom Dale**

**Karen Demers**

**Lynn Donaldson in memory of Roswell Burrows**

**Higgins Lake Foundation**

**Dr & Mrs Robert J. House**

**Kirtland Garden Club**

**Duncan & Kathleen Lawrence**

**Jeff & Millie Mellgren**

**Pam & Steve Miller**

**Jerry Nunn**

**Merrill "Pete" Petoskey in memory of Jean Petoskey**

**Roscommon Area Youth Booster Club**

**Roscommon County Community Foundation**

**Mark & Peggy Scott**

**Richard & Toni Seton**

**Lisa Sutton for Roscommon Area District Library**

**Anna & Don Sylvester**

**Bob & Dawn Tupper**

**John & Liz Wade in honor of Richard Silverman**

**Kathy & Mike Wahl**

**Gerald & Roberta Werle**

# Some Elaboration on the Stories

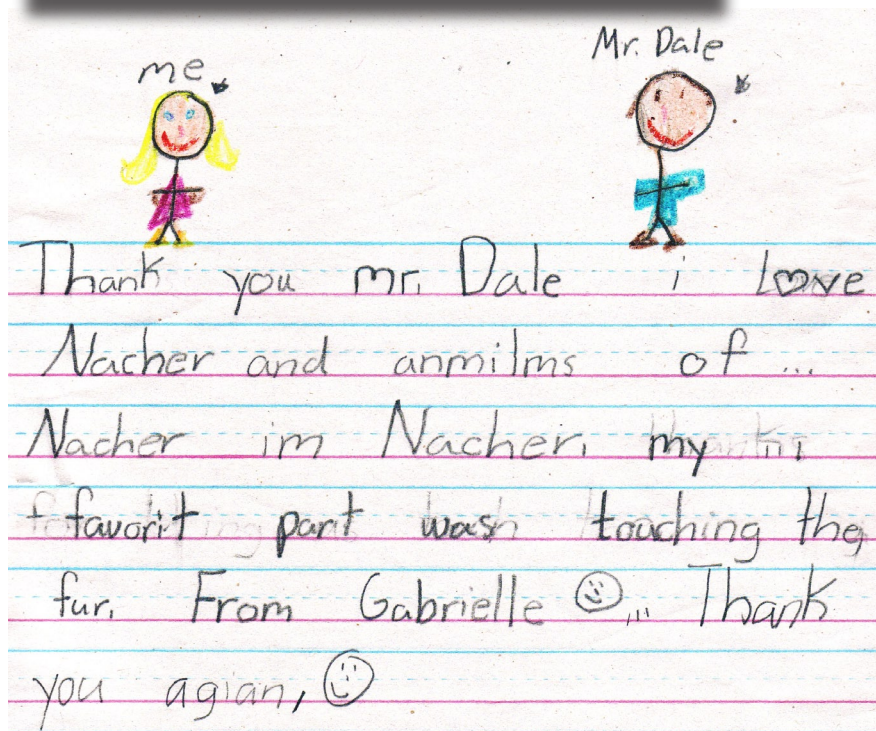
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in the newsletter but let's add a note here. We initially thought about printing an anthology of her writings – prose and poetry from her many newspaper columns – along with a short biography. The more we research about her, the more apparent became the richness and accomplishments of her life. We needed to dig deeper to capture this fascinating figure of Michigan; truly one of this State's greatest citizens. We expect to print this summer. The writers are all volunteers from the Preserve and profits – we are hoping for some – will go to the Preserve's programs.

Thank you to all our members who responded to our plea for membership renewal last November. We sent a letter to past members who had not renewed following the Fall newsletter and had a very nice response. Recall from above that Gahagan is a volunteer run organization. Believe us; the volunteer's time is limited, so we beg that receiving the newsletter or some other twitching of the brain will remind you to renew in the future so we can forego the time and expense of such a mailing.

Come out and enjoy the Preserve this year!

Below: Another great "thank you" from a Gahagan field trip attendee!



Tom Dale will present an encore of **WOW: Wonders of Weasels** at this year's Family Night, July 19 at 7 pm at the cabin.

It caps Summer Camp Week, July 17-19. See the story above.

# Gahagan Nature Camp 2012

**Three days! July 19-21. Each day 9:00 til Noon**

Boys and girls and parents too, be sure to mark your calendars for our annual Nature Camp. You won't want to miss it. We always have a great time. The Camp is all about Nature. We will play some exciting games, try our hands at some challenging crafts and explore the far corners of the Preserve. Children of membership families attend for free, while others will pay a daily fee of \$5. Participation is limited to children in the age range of 7-11 and is limited to the first 24 children who register. You can register on-line [www.GahaganNature.org](http://www.GahaganNature.org) or pick up a registration form at the CRAF center after school dismisses in June. If you have any question you can give us a call 989-275-3217 or [thdale@core.com](mailto:thdale@core.com)

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## WOW!

Two little mice, Corky and Slim, were recently confronted with a terrible scare. There they were, huddled in their tiny burrow down under a fallen tree that was buried in the snow, when suddenly, lurking above was a most terrible threat. Wally Weasel was on the prowl and searching for his next meal and well, "mice are nice."

A weasel can come right down in a mouse's den you know? Things were certainly tense, and then suddenly, the weasel was gone! Whew! That was close! What happened?

It was a Oscar the Great Horned Owl and owls can be pretty terrible too. Slim thought they should go up and thank him for chasing that awful weasel away. Corky was smart when he said: "Are you crazy? That owl would eat us just as sure as that weasel would."

And so it went. The puppet show is just about the favorite part of the visiting naturalist program: WOW – The Wonder of Weasels. The program that is jointly sponsored by our preserve and Kirtland Community College visited 17 schools over the winter and presented to over 3000 children.



# The Upper AuSable River Watershed Monitoring Project

## Our 8th River Day is June 2

[www.ausableriverwatershed.org](http://www.ausableriverwatershed.org)

It is hard to believe it! We are about to get into the AuSable River for our 8th monitoring event on June 2nd. What began as a hopeful grant proposal to MiCorps in 2007 has developed into a really big deal. Our annual June event will see six teams of enthusiastic volunteers scouring the river for benthic (bottom dwelling) macro (not microscopic) invertebrates (bugs). Meet up with us at the College at 1:00 pm.

The sampling sites are on each major branch of the watershed and extend for 300 feet along the stream. The collection process takes about an hour. Once collected and preserved, the samples are taken to a science lab at Kirtland Community College for identification and scoring. The identification process usually takes several afternoons or evenings to complete and relies heavily on the skills of some very accomplished entomologists. Working with them is a great way to hone your bug identification skills. The final step is to score the collections.

The scoring process places the identified bugs into groupings based upon their habitat preferences and water quality tolerances and uses a protocol common to all MiCorps funded projects. Our results are added to the MiCorps database and are available to all interested parties. The collections are maintained in an exhibit at the AuSable River Center in Roscommon. All of our samples have scored very high as you might have guessed and provides us with our primary motivation for being involved in this project in the first place.

Our principle goals for the watershed monitoring effort are to help ensure, both for the short term and long term, the good health of the river, by establishing ecological benchmarks and to enlist a large cadre friends of the river as volunteers. That's it. That is what we are all about. It's a lot of fun and you get to work with a very dedicated group of river lovers (there are about 100 of us) and of course there is the mighty AuSable River.

Check us out at [AusableRiverWatershed.org](http://AusableRiverWatershed.org).

*Get involved in River Day - Call or Email Tom Dale today. 989-275-8206, [thdale@core.com](mailto:thdale@core.com)*

### Learn and Contribute

**at the 8th River Day - June 2**

**at the Bird Count - May 30**

### Birding at the Preserve

When we got together last spring to tally the birds inhabiting the Preserve, we did pretty good, counting 32 species and a total of 92 birds. We had a good day. We have done better. In 2007 we counted 36 species and a total of 148 birds. Our total species since beginning the count in 2001 stands at 63. The annual bird count is fun, but it is also useful. By keeping an annual count, we can begin to assess the health of the Preserve. So on May 30th, please consider joining us. We start at 8:00 am and systematically canvas the preserve and count the birds. We work together in teams, usually a single team, and listen, look and count. It's a lot of fun and it's the way you become a birder. You just begin. Oh, we are finished at noon.

### Gahagan Membership Dues

We greatly appreciate your support of Gahagan through your yearly dues contribution. Dues are a mere \$15 for an individual and \$25 for a family membership. In case you were wondering just when to renew your membership, our dues cycle runs from October to October. Naturally we are happy to accept your membership contribution at any time. Your sponsorship ensures that this natural resource remains open and accessible to all.

Last year, dues renewal was low - until we prompted our past members that the Preserve could use a little boost by having the sign up again. You came through. This spring's storm provided an example that our expenses are not always predictable.

A mail in form is located on the back of the newsletter. You may also renew through our website at [GahaganNature.org](http://GahaganNature.org).

## Writing About Marguerite

Are you aware that Gahagan Nature Preserve plans to publish a book of prose compiled from Marguerite's vast collection of writings. Call it an anthology of her nature writings as they appeared in her publication ***The North Woods Call***.

As we have progressed with our endeavor to publish this tribute to Marguerite, we have found the need to make several revisions. Our original concept was to publish a series of publications. Each book was to focus on a different season of the year beginning with winter. In moving forward, we have decided to publish just one book including writings from all four seasons, including a biography of her fascinating life.

This decision has altered both our time line as well as the volume of material to be included in the book. We have had several false starts and missteps with this project, but now feel that we are focused and moving forward in the right direction and hope to have it completed by fall. Any profit made by the Gahagan Nature Preserve from sale of the book will go to the Preserve for use in its programs.

We hope to have the book available in time for our open house in September. Keep tuned to **[www.GahaganNature.org](http://www.GahaganNature.org)** where we will let you know the details as we know them.

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## Sammy is Back!

Sammy came out of hibernation in great shape. In the winter when the cabin is closed, Sammy goes home with education director, Tom Dale, and into a cold room. That's it. No more food until spring. It sure wasn't Sammy's idea, but when it gets really cold, but not freezing, snakes become dormant. And that's the way it was all winter until that really big storm that took all the trees down at the preserve and knocked out the power for a few days. The cold room would have become a frozen room, so we just had to move Sammy into the warm part of the house and that was the end of the dormant period. In no time, Sammy was crawling around; hungry. I had a couple of mice in the freezer and they were gone in no time. We had to get right to the pet store and lately Sammy has been eating 2 mice each week. And guess what? Sammy is a growing snake. One morning a couple of weeks ago, there was a shed snake-skin in the cage. Snakes shed their skin when they are growing because the skin just won't grow with them. So kids, you can expect to see a much bigger Sammy when you come to the preserve this spring.



Marguerite Gahagan

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## Thanks to Higgins Lake Foundation

Environmental Educator, Tom Dale has the students from area schools collect things when they come to Gahagan Preserve on field trips. Lots of them are small. Microscope small. But what to do when he needs to point out interesting small things on these already small creatures? Higgins Lake Foundation to the rescue. A grant of \$300 from the Foundation will soon buy Gahagan a projector that can throw the microscopic onto a screen in our classroom.

Thank you Higgins Lake Foundation as we help teach our youth about their natural world and Tom stirs the interest of science to another generation of students.

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## It Was Quite a Surprise

MGNP was invited to send a representative to the RAM Center on Higgins Lake at 1:00 pm on Tuesday April 24th. We were surprised then to learn that the Department of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Division: Roscommon District meeting has a practice of giving staff members the option of attending the meeting "out of uniform" by donating to a fund. It was then the practice to select a worthy organization to receive that fund. They thought of us and we are gratefully.

So thank you State Park staff for your generous donation.



# Storm Whacks Gahagan - Spring Clean-up Crew Digs In

The heavy snowstorm of March 2 downed trees, snapped their tops and peeled off limbs. Four trees leaned on the cabin's roof. Two large cedars were lost in the boardwalk and pond area. Several trees damaged the deer enclosure nearest the cabin. It took several weeks for volunteers to clear the trails for hiking. Work continued on the Spring Clean-up day, Saturday, April 21. A good reminder - we always have a spring clean-up at the end of April to ready the preserve for the coming of school field trips. Check [GahaganNature.org](http://GahaganNature.org) for this and other calendar items



From Top to Bottom:

The Fairbanks family all chip in on Clean-up day to spruce up the area around the cabin.

One of the deer enclosure demonstration pens damaged by the March 2 storm.

The cabin was the final resting place for several trees.

One of the large cedars lost from the snow's weight.



**Birds sing after a storm; why shouldn't people feel as free to delight in whatever remains to them?**

**Rose Kennedy**



# The ABC's of Gahagan Nature Preserve

By Roscommon Middle School Fifth Graders

Astonishing  
Ballistic place to be  
Catching frogs  
Digging in mud  
Extraordinary experiences  
Fantastic place to be  
Games that teach us  
Heck of a lot of fun  
I love Gahagan Nature Preserve  
  
Just having fun  
Kicking sticks along the paths  
Looking at things I've never seen before  
Mr. Dale rocks  
Nuts falling on People's heads  
Owl pellets are interesting little packets  
  
Playing nature games is a blast  
Quiet place to hear animals  
Robin's nest  
Seeing Sammy the Rat snake  
  
Taking adventures  
Using a microscope for the first time  
Vacation from school  
We love seeing the skulls  
X-rays of insects are cool  
You will never want to leave  
Zooming around the Nature Preserve.

## RAYBC Contribution

**Roscommon Area Youth Booster Club (RAYBC)** donated \$250 to The Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve for the **Environmental Learning for the Future** program. *ELF* is an award-winning environmental education for elementary-aged children program developed by the Vermont Institute of Natural Science. It is designed to give children an understanding of and appreciation for the natural world. Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve (MGNP) has created approximately 80 *ELF* teaching kits. The kits are loaned to schools for use during the school year. The kits are returned to The Preserve where they are refurbished, restocked and repaired.

*ELF* encompasses five ecological concepts: Habitats, Cycles, Adaptations, Designs of Nature, and Earth and Sky. *ELF* schools focus on one concept each year. There are approximately 15 teaching kits that correspond to each concept. Each *ELF* teaching kit contains multiple activities complete with resource materials such as slideshows, mammal and bird skull sets, audio tapes, puppet shows, rock collections, games, etc.

To be successful, *ELF* needs a committed team of volunteer educators. Volunteer educators gather monthly for a two-hour training workshop in which they learn the activities included in that particular kit. Trained volunteers then go into the classroom for 60 – 90 minutes each month to share the lessons and activities. MGNP provides the training workshop and helps volunteers develop teaching skills and adapt the lessons to various grade levels.

Currently, volunteers are needed for the Roscommon Elementary School. If you are interested in becoming an *ELF* volunteer or would like further information please contact Tracy Bosworth at 989-390-0903.

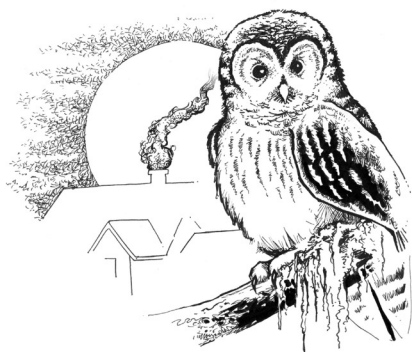
## Bosworth Leads ELF

Tracy Bosworth, retired teacher from the Roscommon Area Public Schools now leads the Gahagan *ELF* Program. The particulars of *ELF* are described in the article above, "RAYBC Contribution."

Tom Dale continues as MGNP's Education Director concentrating on the Visiting Naturalist Program where he teaches a program in area schools from February to April, the Spring and Fall school field trip programs at Gahagan and the summer camp program in July conducted with Tracy and Karen Demers.

**Join Tom Dale at the Gahagan Preserve Walk, Friday, May 18 at 5pm at the Cabin.**

**Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve**  
**PO Box 421**  
**Roscommon, MI 48653**



## **Come Join Us at the Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve!**

Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve operates as a non-profit organization run by volunteers and funded by its members, generous donors and the endowment left by Marguerite. Did you know that it provides environmental education for many of the schools in the surrounding counties? Did you know that the 60-acre preserve is open to the public for hiking, snowshoeing, birding and many other uses? Did you know we have an asphalt and boardwalk trail that is wheelchair friendly? It travels through woods and wetlands and along the beginnings of Tank Creek. Interested in learning and helping? Please join us!

Yes, I/we want to join Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve. Enclosed is my/our yearly membership.

\$15 ☐ Individual / \$25 ☐ Family / \$50 ☐ Organizational \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Donation

I am making a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ in memory of, ☐ in honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Ph: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks to **Gahagan Nature Preserve, Inc.** and mail to **P.O. Box 421, Roscommon, Mi 48653**

**You can also donate, join, or renew your membership on-line at [www.GahaganNature.org](http://www.GahaganNature.org)**