



**Newsletter of the Gahagan Nature Preserve, Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 421, Roscommon, MI 48653 • 989-275-3217 • [www.GahaganNature.org](http://www.GahaganNature.org)**  
**Issue #24 ~ Spring 2013**

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## History, Nature, the Conservation Movement and Writing Meet

Often great things happen when two separate disciplines merge. After years of award winning writing in the city, Marguerite Gahagan picked up and left – traveling north to tiny Johannesburg, Michigan. Her focus became the natural world around her. But she was curious and she was a reporter. Marguerite began a new journey – starting a newspaper about nature, its usefulness and the need to conserve it and about the people who lived and worked on this land.

Two different things combined together – nature  
and writing.

Explaining, educating and advocating.

Marguerite took her immense writing skills and her reporter's experience and combined it with a new interest. As she learned about the intricacies of nature, she wrote about them in her weekly, public journal – The North Woods Call – Michigan's Conservation voice.

But as she wrote about the controversies over pollution, pesticides, hunting, fishing and use of natural resources, Gahagan wove a poetic thread into her special, weekly column called "Pine Whispers." She wrote tales about her backyard fur and feathered friends – her little people. Marguerite peered into mid-century northern Michigan life. She vented about the trials of writing and publishing a one-woman weekly. Her readers knew Marguerite well even if they had never met her.

Now you can meet the woman who left her estate as the Gahagan Nature Preserve. Late last year, we published a full-length book telling Marguerite's

story; Pine Whispers: The Biography & Writings of Marguerite Gahagan. It's a story of a woman successfully navigating a man's world of big city newspapers in the 1930's and 40's. Her acts of humanity and the awards she earned from them. The creation in 1953 of her acclaimed rural weekly which had a statewide circulation and impacted Michigan's natural resource policy for several generations. It paints a picture of small towns and a dynamic woman that championed them.

Part biography, part history, part poetry, it can be swallowed whole or broken in parts. It's perfect reading for the up north cabin or the history buff. Take a dose while curled by the winter fire. Leave it on the table for down-state visitors to digest during their stay. It's a natural gift for any nature-loving friend.

A number of stores carry "Pine Whispers" in the Roscommon and Crawford county area. They are listed on our website. It can be ordered and shipped anywhere through [www.GahaganNature.org](http://www.GahaganNature.org). Best of all, the proceeds go directly to Gahagan Nature Preserve and its education programs.

So again, two separate disciplines have merged - writing and nature – just had Marguerite envisioned.

Spring came quietly in the mist and rain  
Then stood ...Lovely, in a moment of sunshine.

- From Pine Whispers: The Biography & Writings  
of Marguerite Gahagan

## Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve Board of Directors ~ 2013

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: Troy Fairbanks

Secretary/Treasurer: Bobbie Werle 275-4031

Julie Borak  
Joanne Bouck  
Jeremy Jones  
George Maroney  
Richard Silverman

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

Tracy Bosworth, Exec. Director  
989-390-0903  
tracyboz@yahoo.com

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

## 2013 Gahagan Schedule

**May 1-June 7:** School Enviro Field Trips at Gahagan  
**May 15:** Rosco Business Expo from 3-7pm at the CRAF Center  
**May 17:** Gahagan Preserve Walk at 5pm at Gahagan  
**May 29:** Summer Bird Count from 8am-12pm at Gahagan  
**June 1:** AuSable River Collection at 1pm at Kirtland CC  
**June 18:** Wonders of Weasels from 11am-2pm at the Gaylord Library  
**June 20:** Wonders of Weasels at 10:30am at the Roscommon Library  
**July 16-18:** Nature Camp from 9am-Noon at Gahagan  
**July 18:** Family Night Feature at 7pm at Gahagan  
**Aug. 17:** AuSable River Festival from 10 am-5 pm in Roscommon  
**Sept. 7:** AuSable River Collection at 10am at the Gates Lodge  
**Sept. 9-Oct. 11:** School Enviro Field Trips at Gahagan  
**Sept. 22:** Gahagan Open House & General Membership Meeting from 4pm-7pm at Gahagan.

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).

## 2012-13 Honor Roll Donations and Memorials

The Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve thanks the following organizations and individuals that kindly donated to our mission during 2012 and early 2013.

5th Street Market - Jeannie & John Bennick  
Mazuka A Tanaka  
Richard Seton in memory of Toni Seton  
Betty J. Thomas in memory of John C. Thomas  
John & Betty Colwell  
Sherwood & Sharon Bouderman  
Jack & Liz Wade  
Cliff & Carolyn Colwell  
Bill & Nancy Stanczyk  
Good Shepard Methodist Men's Group  
In Memory of Tom Weaver:  
Jodi & Larry Leaf  
Rita & Paul Call  
Dan Dawson  
Doug & Ruth Fitch  
Bruce & Betty Phillips  
Patrick & Kathryn Murphy  
Linda Barber  
Don & Tudy Theile  
Ed & Donna Walls  
Sandy Walls  
Grand Rapids CC English Dept  
Mark & Tracy Bosworth  
Raye & Tom Polasek  
Anonymous  
West Higgins Lake Hardware  
Karrie Williams  
Dr & Mrs Robert J. House  
Jerry & Darlene Weinrich in memory of Bill Blamer  
Susan Nanry  
Jeff Mellgren  
Roscommon Home Extension  
Ralph & Nancy Rucinski  
Gary & Sharon Boushelle  
Karen Demers  
Art Ketelhut  
Bob & Dawn Tupper  
Julie Boushelle  
Vicki & Pat Springstead  
Pam & Steve Miller in memory of Jill Lippert  
Pam & Steve Miller in memory of Audrey Miller  
Higgins-Houghton Chiropractic Clinic  
Kaki Almirall in honor of Libby Mundy  
Kathy & Mike Wahl  
Lynn Donaldson in memory of Roswell Burrows  
Duncan & Kathy Lawrence  
Kirtland Garden Club  
William Burrows in memory of Elizabeth Burrows  
Anglers of the AuSable  
Weyerhaeuser Grayling OSB Members

# MGNP has an Executive Director

*By Tom Dale*

At the January 2013 board of directors meeting, the decision was made to create and post an opening for a part time executive director to help manage the Preserve. The position would assume the responsibilities of the board treasurer and include general management responsibilities as well. The person in the position would serve as an independent contractor, much as the education director does, under the direct supervision of the board of directors. The board feels very fortunate that Tracy Bosworth has volunteered to serve in that part time position. Tracy has served as a member of the board of directors for several years, most recently as its vice chairman. She is recently retired from Roscommon Area Schools where she taught a wide range of subjects at the middle school.

It is not at all a coincidence that in 1996, when the Preserve was first getting organized, Tracy was quite involved. She helped craft the education program and as minutes of the very first meetings document, she wrote the nature preserve's mission statement.

More recently, while I was away from the preserve due to health issues, Tracy stepped in and helped run the summer nature camp and fall school field trips. Welcome aboard Tracy.

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## New Microscope Mounted Video Camera thanks to the Higgins Lake Foundation

Maybe if you use a microscope, you can see all the way back to December of 2011. That was when The Higgins Lake Foundation presented us with \$300 for the purchase of a video camera, which will connect to our microscope. We are happy to report that we have finally secured the one we wanted.

Every spring when the students from area schools come to the preserve, environmental educator Tom Dale has them dip into Margeurite's pond to see what they can find. Well, they usually find a lot; nets full of very tiny and squirmy "bugs." They next take them to the study table nearby and take a closer look with hand magnifiers. A small sample is then taken into the cabin where a low power nearly antique projecting microscope presents the bugs on the screen. This spring we will be able to take the exploration several magnitudes deeper with the new video camera connected to our compound microscope. It's quite hard to make the point that these tiny water fleas and midge larvae are actually eating or being eaten by..... what? "....and these tiny bugs have tinier bugs that bite um and so proceed ad infinitum!" It's the story of the food chain beginning at the microscopic level and extending all the way up to us. Have you ever eaten a

fish?

Thank you Higgins Lake Foundation for helping us to teach children about the health of our waterways by learning about the critters that inhabit them.



*Bill Baker from the Higgins Lake Foundation joins Tom Dale at the cabin for a demonstration of the new equipment.*



## **Environmental Learning for the Future (ELF) Program**

Project ELF is an award-winning environmental education program developed by the Vermont Institute of Natural Science. ELF has been a very popular and successful program for getting parent and grandparent volunteers into elementary classrooms for nearly 30 years. The ELF program is in hundreds of school districts around the country, including five in our area. ELF is divided into five thematic units. Each school explores a unit theme for the year. MGNP has assembled 80 science teaching kits to cover the five themes. The kits are delivered monthly to our local schools along with an instruction workshop to review the activities. Classroom volunteers then schedule time to present the lessons and activities.

### **The Five Themes of ELF:** **Designs of Nature**

Designs are everywhere in nature, from the spiraling arrangement of scales on a cone to the lacy symmetry of a spider's web to the pattern of cells in a honeycomb. Nature's designs are beautiful to behold, and many of them also have a specific purpose. The closer we look, the more we learn to appreciate the relationship between form and function.

The overlapping scales on a pine cone help to shed water and protect the developing embryos inside. The beautiful web of an orb weaver is also a deadly trap created by the spider to ensnare unwary insects. The cells in a honeycomb, hexagon-shaped so they share walls and fit together tightly, make efficient use of the space in a hive. While viewing some of the intricate designs found in nature, children discover how these forms contribute to an organism's chances of survival.

## **Habitats**

An animal's habitat is the community in which it lives. A habitat provides the food, water, shelter and space that the animal needs to survive. Forest, field, pond, and stream are all unique habitats, their different conditions make each one home to a particular combination of living organisms.

The forest floor is home to shrews and millipedes, while grasses and crickets are found in open fields. Tadpoles live in warm, shallow ponds, but brook trout prefer cold, fast-moving streams. Children discover what makes each habitat suitable for certain organisms but not for others. They explore how habitats change over time and how these changes affect what species can live there. Predators and prey, producers and decomposers, all are important links in the flow of energy from sun to plant to animal and back to plant again.



### **Adaptations**

Why do ducks have webbed feet and rose bushes have thorns? Why does a snowshoe hare freeze rather than flee when a predator approaches? Adaptations in the natural world are the structural or behavioral characteristics of a species that have evolved over time in response to the changing demands of the environment.

The activities within the kits in this theme

introduce and illustrate how different adaptations contribute to the success and survival of various plants and animals. The well-camouflaged snowshoe hare remains perfectly still when it senses danger, a behavioral adaptation to avoid detection. A rose bush's thorns are actually modified leaves, structural adaptations that protect the plant from being eaten. To best meet the demands of life in a watery habitat, ducks evolved the webbed feet that help them swim efficiently as they look for food and safety.

Children learn that an individual organism changes throughout its life cycle, while species change over time.

## Cycles

As we study the natural world, we soon discover that life has few clear-cut beginnings and endings, but rather passes through stages in a continuing cycle. A leaf bud contains the beginnings of new life, but it is also the final product of a summer's growth. A flower dies, but its seeds are left to carry on. Swallows leave their nests and fly to warmer climates for the winter but return each spring to begin nesting again.

The life cycles of organisms often reflect the seasonal cycles of their environment – a resting stage during harsh seasons, an active stage at times when food and warmth are plentiful. Plants bloom and grow in the lengthening days of spring and summer when sunlight and water are available and become dormant as the days shorten and turn colder. Animals, too, change through the seasons. For example, many moths and butterflies survive the winter months in the egg stage from which the tiny, hungry caterpillars emerge just as tender new leaves unfurl in the spring. Likewise, birds nest and raise their young when food supplies, such as

plump, juicy caterpillars, are abundant. Children visit each of the topics – insects, trees, birds, and flowers – at different times of the year, witnessing for themselves these cycles of ongoing change.

## Earth and Sky

What is the connection between plants and the air we breathe, between honeybees and the earth's magnetic field, between ancient shellfish and limestone rocks? In examining the physical characteristics of the world around us, children discover that the living and the nonliving are interwoven in an intricate tapestry.



Life does not exist apart from the physical world. Plants produce the oxygen that forms a portion of the earth's atmosphere. Honeybees depend on cues from the sun's position and the earth's magnetic field in order to find their way. Over the millennia, the remains of shellfish accumulate on the ocean floor where they are pressed and cemented into stone. Learning about the physical environment involves examining the properties of rocks and air, sunlight and sound, and wind and water.

Through the activities in this theme, children explore many different aspects of the physical world as well as the forces that affect and shape the earth over time.

# Wolf Songs

*By Tom Dale*

A little lamb had become lost in the forest and just happened to bump into Big Buck, a white tailed deer, and he says: “Who are you and what are you doing here?” And the lamb says: “I’m Scotty. I’m a Scottish Black-Faced Lamb and I live in a big valley with my mommy and daddy and all my aunts and uncles and cousins and all the other animals.” And Big Buck says: “Well you had better get back there right away because this is also home to the wolf.” And Scotty says: “What’s a wolf?” Hey, it’s a puppet show; something I learned from the ELF program. It’s really hard to lecture to Kindergarteners, but puppets can. The lamb is the novice and asks all the stupid questions and Big Buck is the expert with all the answers. And 2nd graders will “kill” for a chance to perform (read) the script. A Grayling 2nd grader could have won an Academy Award! She was just awesome.

The visiting naturalist program this year is all about wolves and all the other wild dogs that call North America home. Care to venture a guess at just how many species of wild dogs currently live here? In past years, the program has featured bears, cats and weasels. Next year Cat Tales returns. (7 wild dog species)

Kirtland Community College, the National Wildlife Federation, and the US Forest Service out of Mio sponsor the visiting naturalist program, now in its 12th year. Kirtland provides nearly all of the funding, plus wolf stickers featuring Scott Rice’s artwork and a pencil for each student. The National Wildlife Federation provides the Wolf Trunk, including wolf and coyote pelts, skulls and much more. The US Forest Service sponsors the Young Artists Calendar Contest. And finally, my neighbors the Tudors provided beautiful fox pelts.

The program visited 15 Schools and 2 public libraries and presented to 3100 students and adults. It has been a very good year.



*Education Director Tom Dale presents “Wolf Songs” to a group of Grayling Elementary School students.*

## Wolf Battle

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that was going on inside of himself.

He said, “My son, it is a battle between 2 wolves. One is evil and is filled with anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego.

The other is good and beams with joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith...”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf wins?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one I feed.”



## Spring Field Trips

From now until the end of the school year, our Preserve will be focused on school field trips. Many classes of K-7th grade students will hike over or ride buses. First we will need to get the grounds and cabin cleaned up and ready for company. That happened on April 20th. That was our clean-up day. Thank you volunteers! Now the new video camera will need to be installed on the compound microscope and made ready for use. Using a video projector on a compound microscope will allow us to go several magnitudes of magnification deeper into the pond water and observe protozoa and bacteria. The water level in the pond is always a wild card. Some years it has been over the dock. We expect classes from Roscommon Elementary and Middle Schools as well as classes from Grayling and West Branch. It's going to be a great spring. Don't miss it.

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## Making Waves Grant from Weyerhaeuser Employees

Making Waves is a program created by the Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund that fosters volunteerism and supports Weyerhaeuser employees' good works in the community. During the summer of 2012, several employees from the Weyerhaeuser OSB mill in Grayling spearheaded two river clean-ups on the AuSable. As a result of their actions, they were awarded a \$1000.00 grant from the Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund. It was their decision to donate that grant to the MGNP in memory of Thomas Weaver.

We are very grateful to the Grayling OSB employees and the Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund for their generosity.

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## Items Needed!

During the 2011 winter shut down of the cabin, seemingly several generations of mice took up residence in our metal filing cabinet. While you may think that it would have been a simple task to clean-up, that has not been the case. We have had to scrap the cabinet and now need to replace it. So if you happen to have a metal filing cabinet in smooth working order that you would like to donate, please give Tracy a call at 989-390-0903.

Hey...we could also use a radio flyer wagon. Really helpful when hauling teaching materials around to the outdoor classrooms!

## "Spring" Clean Up

Around the first week of April, as the days are getting longer and the temperatures warm, we have the water in the cabin turned on, and we start to tidy up. Near the end of April, we pick a Saturday to give the cabin and the trails an all-out cleaning. Windows, walls, floors and furniture are scrubbed, the trails are cleared of brush, trail markers and maps are refurbished, asphalt, decks and roofs are swept, and the garage gets broomed and organized. Then we share a hearty lunch. Well that was the plan anyway. Saturday, April 20, 2013 was picked as the clean-up day, but no one informed Mother Nature. Blustery winds, sub-freezing temperatures and an inch deep blanket of snow put a stop to our trail clearing, but the inside of the cabin sure looks spiffy now!



*Spring.  
Gahagan Style.  
April 20, 2013*

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## Gahagan Nature Camp 2013 Our 13th Nature Camp

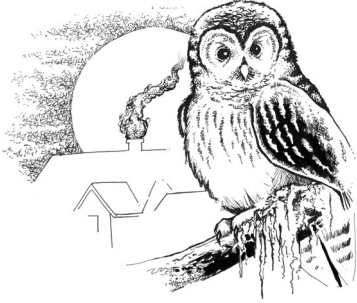
**Three days! July 16-18 Each Day 9:00 till Noon**

So by now you know that nature camp is a big success. It is all about interacting with the outdoors. We explore the far reaches of the preserve, investigate the various ecosystems on the property, play games and work on a few craft projects along the way. Best of all we develop new friendships. Children of membership families attend for \$10 per camper, while others will pay a fee of \$20 per camper. Participation is open to children in the age range of 7-11 and is limited to the first 24 children who register. You can register online at [www.Gahagan-Nature.org](http://www.Gahagan-Nature.org) or pick up a registration at the CRAF center after school dismisses in June. If you have any questions, give us a call at 989-275-3217 or contact Tom at [thdale@core.com](mailto:thdale@core.com)

## Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve

P.O. 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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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)