



The Chinquapin

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The Official Publication Of The Royal Oak Nature Society

Bob and Don's Most Excellent Adventure: the making of two naturalists by Don Drife and Bob Muller

A question often asked to Bob and Don is, "If you don't do this for a living, how did you learn all this stuff." Many people attending our walks do not realize that Don and Bob are amateur naturalists. This is part of the story of how they learned--and continue to learn-- about the natural world.

Robert Muller was born in Pleasant Ridge, Michigan and raised in Royal Oak. He attended Whittier Elementary School, Barton and Keller Junior Highs, and Dondero High School. With a father who worked at Weber's Greenhouse in Pleasant Ridge, Bob was exposed to a green world and learned the names of plants—both native and domestic. He was one of those kids that caught stuff: bugs, tadpoles, toads, land snails and the like. Royal Oak in the 1950s was undergoing rapid post World War II expansion. However, many pockets of nature existed. He recalls playing in a huge woods on Gardena near Campbell Road, that the kids called Campbell Woods. Looking back now at the 1949 aerial photo, the woods was only a few acres in size. Red-backed Salamanders lived in the woods at the back of Oakview Cemetery, another place the kids played. Nature was around and most kids experienced at least part of it.

In the second grade a fellow student brought in a crayfish for show-and-tell and Bob says he "lost his mind." He had never imagined such a thing. He wanted one. At dinner that night he excitedly told his dad about this bizarre creature. His father responded by calmly asking if he would like to go and look for crayfish after dinner. So they went to Campbell Woods; Bob waded into a pond, caught a crayfish, and has been jumping into ponds ever since.

Bob started his scouting life as a Cub Scout and moved up to Boy Scouts. This got him into the woods,

camping year-round. He left scouting during his Junior year in High School but returned eventually becoming scoutmaster for his old troop. He won Scouting's distinguished service award, the Silver Beaver, for making "an impact on the lives of youth through service given to the council."

In Dondero's library, he discovered a copy of Carl Hubbs's *Fishes of the Great Lakes Region*, checked it out, and continued checking it out for most of the school year. Minnows and other fish found on scout campouts could now be identified. Bob traveled twice to the Amazon River basin studying fishes and photographing the ecosystem. He also canoed six times from Lake Superior to James Bay with the Boy Scouts, climbed The Grand in the Tetons and worked on a fishing boat in Alaska.

Today, Bob is a board member of the Greater Detroit Aquarium Society and serves on the Board of Directors



Bob's first program-1974

(Continued on page 2)

****PLEASE NOTE**** : Our June speaker program will be held at **Northwood Elementary School** and NOT at the Royal Oak Senior Center. Please see page 3 for details.

(Continued from page 1)

for the North American Native Fishes Association. His study of fish has resulted in successful breeding of 50 species, half of them native. He is recognized world-wide for unbelievably high quality photographs of small fish that have appeared in many publications including *American Currents*. In the last few years he has discovered two species of fishes not recorded previously in Michigan—the Mummichug and the Dusky Darter.

Bob met Kelly Turok at Oakland Community College and they married three-years later, in 1969. They have two daughters, Heather and Holly, and six grandchildren. Heather served as the first president of the Nature Society. Kelly gave Bob a copy of *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* by Ewell Gibbons for their first anniversary, and he began to eat wild plants. Acorn bread, hickory nut pie, and cattail pollen biscuits were favorites.

One day in 1973 he bicycled past Quickstad Park and saw a notice for an evening nature walk. There he met Robert Gasiorowski and a young high school student by the name of Don Drife. Robert Gasiorowski was a biology and environmental science teacher at Kimball High. His work for his Masters degree included a statistical survey of the forest composition of Tenhave Woods. He was also a bird bander and his notes form the foundation of the our present bird list. It is exciting to see a wild bird held in the hand. To feel its rapid heartbeat, observe its different feather types, and to learn characteristics that go beyond basic field marks. Gasiorowski would allow children to touch a wild bird because he believed that once a child connected with a bird they were not likely to harm one.

Donald Drife was born in Detroit, Michigan and grew up in Royal Oak. He attended Starr Elementary School, Mary Lyon Junior High, and Kimball High School. His father was a machine designer with an interest in the natural world. Don's parents met in an orchid bog on an outing of the Detroit News Hikers. In the 1960s Royal Oak still had parks that were wild. Butternut Woods (now Starr-Jaycee Park) was a wild area with a stream down the middle and three small ponds to catch tadpoles in. It was a place to go to watch birds and collect butterflies.

Don's dad was a longtime member of the Cranbrook Institute of Science and Don grew up hearing lecturers such as Roger Tory Peterson, and Olin Sewall Pettingill. Family friends included the botanists George Thomson and Paul Thompson, ecologist Hessel Tenhave, and Cranbrook's ornithologist Walter Nickell.

Dr. Nickell was one of the best overall naturalists in the state. On Saturdays in the spring and fall he would lead nature walks, some on the Cranbrook grounds and some to places such as Arkona, Kettle Point, and Point Pelee National Park. At a lunch break during

one of the Pelee trips, Don was thumbing through a copy of *Michigan Trees* by Charles Otis attempting to identify a hackberry tree by matching the leaf to the pictures. Dr. Nickell showed him how to use a botanical key and a new world of plants opened.

For his eleventh birthday, Don received a copy of Henry Gleason's *Plants of Michigan*. It is a simplified botanical key and taught him to recognize different plant families. This now worn and annotated book is still consulted and at times carried in the field.

Don's family camped every summer at different spots in Michigan. His younger brother and parents stayed in a nine-by-nine canvas tent flanked by a pair of pup tents, one for his sisters, and one he shared with his older brother. His father taught him how Nature is a tightly woven web and a change in one section of it impacts other sections. At Hoeft State Park, they found a hummingbird nest and Don wondered why they did not nest in Royal Oak. Hummingbirds use lichens in their nests, lichens died out in Royal Oak because of air pollution, so they can't nest [note: as the air quality improved lichens have returned.] Camping was a time to make photographs and observations of the natural world.

Royal Oak started a nature program in the summer of 1972. There Don met Howard Miller and Robert Gasiorowski. Summer walks began in the Environmental Science classroom in Kimball High. Then the group would walk to Tenhave. Howard and Don began to keep lists of the birds, plants, and insects seen in the park. Evening walks and speaker programs were added. Both Bob and Don presented their first talks to this group. Bob spoke on edible wild plants and Don on wildflowers.



Robert Gasiorowski, a Blue Jay and Don

(Continued on page 3)

SPEAKER PROGRAMS

*June's general meeting/speaker programs will be held Northwood Elementary School. t 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 **7:30 pm**, with the speaker program following several minutes later.*

"Nature Society Year in Review" program will take place on Wednesday, **June 3rd, 7:30 pm** at **Northwood Elementary School** (on 12 Mile Rd, about ¼ mile west of Crooks. The school parking is off of McDonald Rd (just west of the school). The program will be held in the **cafetorium**.

Google map: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Northwood+Elementary+School/@42.505579,-83.15467,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x8824c5f82d7a1d0b:0x85163d05d56db073?hl=en>

We will talk about and show photos on what has been going on with the Nature Society, Cummingston Park, Tenhave Woods and the Royal Oak Arboretum in Worden Park East this past season.

Looking For Dream Cruise Volunteers

The **Woodward Dream Cruise** is only a few months away. Try something different and sign up to volunteer to help us with parking at Gunn Dyer Park on Saturday, **August 15, 2015**. The park located at Hampton & Chester, is just a few blocks north of Memorial Park and one block east of Woodward. Our day begins around 8 am and finishes up around 8 pm. Shifts are only about 3 hours long.

Our main responsibility is to collect parking fees and direct drivers to open parking spots. It can get extremely busy in the early afternoon, so, we could use all of the help that we can get. When your shift is over, you can keep your car at Gunn Dyer Park while you walk on over

to the Dream Cruise. It is only a block away.

If you volunteer for us at Dream Cruise, you are invited to our annual **pre-Dream Cruise picnic**. It will take place on the Friday (**14th**) evening, the day before the actual Dream Cruise. Time is from 6:00 to and 8:30 pm. The Nature Society supplies the burgers. This is a pleasant way to sit back and enjoy the pre-Dream Cruise atmosphere. While we are there, we collect money from people who park their cars at Gunn Dyer.

If you have some free time on the 15th and would like to give us a helping hand, please give Ted Vickers a call at 248-549-5366 or e-mail him at naturesociety@romi.gov.

(Continued from page 2)

Howard Miller was an amateur naturalist with a great curiosity. He studied birds, plants, insects, fungi... He was retired so on days when there was no nature program he often took Don out to one of the Metro Parks or State Recreation Areas. [note from Don: After Howard died his library and field notes were given to me. Our knowledge of the flora of the nature areas from the 1970s largely comes from Howard's notes.] He and his wife Cassie, who was an excellent photographer, presented at the speaker's program.. The city's nature program ran until 1977.

In the late 1970s Bob and Don gradually lost touch with each other, raising families, earning a living. Bob as a product designer and Don as a machine designer.

Don met Joyce in 1981 on a Michigan Audubon Society whitewater rafting trip along Idaho's Salmon River. They were married in 1983. Their studies include

the flora of Crawford County, and Michigan ferns.

Working with Drs. Herb and Florence Wagner from the University of Michigan they hunted moonworts, small members of the grapefern group. Don and Joyce helped discover and name some species that were new to science. Michigan had four species when they started and now has eleven.

In 1998, the City of Royal Oak proposed running eight -foot wide asphalt paths through the woods at Quickstad Park. Neighbors objected and the city asked, "what should we do with the park?" An ad hoc committee was established that came up with the idea of having nature walks in the park and the Royal Oak Nature Society was born. In October of 1999, Joyce answered a phone call, asked who the caller was, and exclaimed "Oh, that Bob Muller." She had not met Bob but she had heard stories. Our first walks were held in 2000.

To be continued in a future newsletter...

NATURE WALKS

CUMMINGSTON PARK: Park is just east of Meijers. Park and meet at Leafdale & Torquay

TENHAVE WOODS: Park is just east of Royal Oak High School. Park in Marais/Lexington lot and meet at the Lexington entrance (300 feet east of parking lot). For the Owl Hoots & Full Moon walks, park and meet at the Marais/Lexington lot.

ARBORETUM: Park and meet on the north side of the Royal Oak Senior/Community Center (3500 Marais)

"Late Spring Nature Walk" is being held at **Tenhave Woods** on Thursday, **June 25th**, at **7:30 pm**. Join us and see what is happening in the woods during the late spring and beginning of summer.

"Mushroom Walk" Saturday, **June 27th**, at **Cummingston Park** beginning at **10:00 am**.

"Meadow of the Arboretum" is being held at the Royal Oak Arboretum on Thursday, **July 23rd** beginning at **7:30 pm**.

"Mushroom Walk" Saturday, **July 25th**, at **Tenhave Woods** beginning at **10:00 am**.

"Meadow of the Arboretum" is being held at the Royal Oak Nature Society Arboretum on Thursday, **August 20th**, beginning at **7:30 pm**.

"Mushroom Walk" Saturday, **August 22nd**, at **Cummingston Park** beginning at **10:00 am**.

Royal Oak Nature Society Friends of Fungi is a group that promotes the understanding of, and an appreciation for, fungi in general and those fungi found in Tenhave Woods, Cummingston Park, and other local urban woods. This group is open to anyone who wants to learn more about fungi which also includes mushrooms. They meet on Wednesday's at the Royal Oak Senior Center (3500 Marais) beginning at 7:00 pm in November and again January thru March. There are monthly public walks from April thru October. This group is lead by Mary Fredricks, a member and botanist/mycologist of the Royal Oak Nature Society.

For more information, please check out the Friends of Fungi link:

<http://www.ci.royal-oak.mi.us/community-links/nature-society/announcements/friends-fungi>

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTING MEMBERS

A special thank you from the Nature Society goes out to the following 2014/15 Supporting Members for their support and financial contribution to us:

Doris Applebaum

Pat & Ray Coleman

Gerry DeLong

Cindy Gunnip

Jana Kelly

Jim Langhammer

Alice & Arthur Marotti

Jim & Laura Rogers

Robert & Susan Schneider

Caryle Spence

Krystn Aversa

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Margaret Moran

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Charles Svalya

Pam & Mike Brady

Laurine Cybulski

Laura Gogola

Ray & Vivienne Kell

Donna Kuchapsky

Carolyn Ludwig

Gail Partee

Nancy Schermerhorn

Kristin, Derek, Jackson, Tyler Smith

Nature Night held in 2015

Our only Nature Night of the 2015 season was held on January 29 at Helen Keller Elementary School. Total number for the evening was 115 children/adults. The Nature Society wants to thank Brian Arbeiter, for being our Keller Nature Night coordinator .

A special thanks goes out to all of our exhibitors:
 Kristine & Max Hill and Dean Olkowski-Birds
 Nancy Vickers & Joyce Drife-Crafts
 Don Drife-Owl Pellets
 Dena Serrato-Seed Planting

Bob Muller-Skulls & Skins
 Phillip Kukulski -North American Native Fish
 Amanda Felk- Bats
 Troop 1627-Tree Rings
 Rebecca Johnson- Amphibians
 John & Mike Topor-Fossils
 Edi Sontagg-Reptiles
 Dan Briere-Little Creatures



Bob Muller's Skulls & Skins Nature Night exhibit

Please check out our Facebook page & "like" the Royal Oak Nature Society.

Page: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Royal-Oak-Nature-Society/228095233882566>



Educational Wildlife Programs



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Royal Oak Nature Society Membership Form

Please make check payable 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 (household members): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

1 year Household Membership
 (September-August)

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ General (free) | Receive newsletter |
| ☐ Associate (\$5) | by: |
| ☐ Supporting (\$10 & up) | ☐ Regular mail OR |
| ☐ Patron (\$50 & up) | ☐ E-mail |

NATURE SOCIETY TEAMS

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

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

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, Tenhave Woods and the Arboretum.

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Don Drife (248-528-0479)

Vice President & Communication: Ted Vickers (248-549-5366)

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

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

Education: Chris Ethridge (248 229-9335)

Program: Bob Muller (248-398-0195)

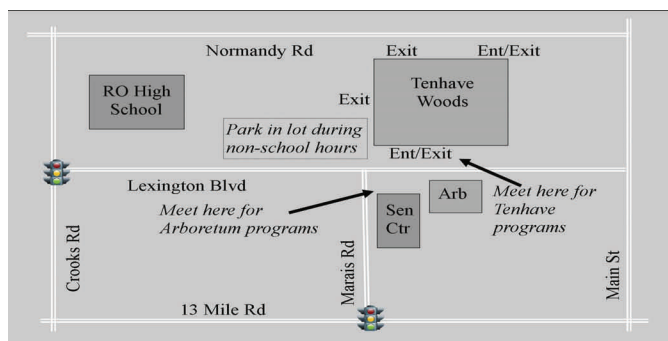
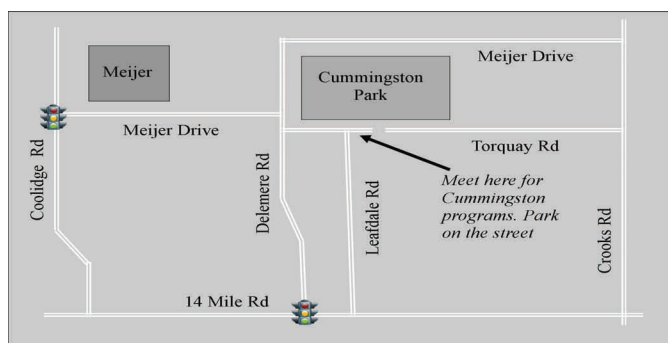
At Large: Dena Serrato (248-542-2820)

Troop/Pack 1627 Representative & Engineer: Richard Stoll (248-398-2437)

Cummingston Park, Tenhave Woods, and the Arboretum



Traffic Light



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. In addition, we are in the process of creating an arboretum in Worden Park East. We also offer a wide range of natural history educational programs.

The Royal Oak Nature Society
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www.romi.gov/nature

