

# Lake Erie Islands Chapter of the Black Swamp Conservancy



August 2003

## What's In Your Backyard?

by Debbie Woischke

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A wise person once said, "Your own paradise should be in your backyard." But how many of us really know what we even have in our own backyards? We may have traveled hundreds or thousands of miles to see the Grand Canyon or the giant sequoias or Alaskan glaciers, but how many of us have ever been on Green Island, or Starve or Ballast? I must confess that though I spent the first eight years of my life on South Bass, and have visited regularly since moving away, it took me over 30 years to get to Kelleys for the first time, and over 40 before I ever set foot on Gibraltar! But it was the curiosity about what special things I might be missing "in my own backyard" that finally led me to those places. And with that in mind, I thought it would be fun to explore some noteworthy features on some of the smaller and lesser-known islands.

### Starve Island

You might notice this tiny rock outcropping from the ferry as you approach South Bass, or you might not. It has a few trees to lend some green color in summer to what is otherwise black with cormorants and white with gulls and their whitewash. In the winter, gray is the predominant color. It is the gray of dolomite, and therein lies what is perhaps most special about Starve Island. It is covered with glacial grooves and striations, left behind after the retreat of the last ice age. Rocks and other materials that were embedded in the bottom of the massive layer of ice were slowly dragged across the exposed bedrock as the glacier moved. This left the scoring that can be seen today. These beautiful markings undulate like small waves and ripples across the rock pavement.

Growing out of cracks in the rocks here and there is the hardy little harebell, a state endangered plant. Harebells succeed in a harsh environment where few other plants can survive. They are found on rocky outcrops and shorelines that, depending on the lake level, may be left high and dry or washed with waves in summer, and scoured with ice and bitter cold wind in winter. The purple blossoms, slender green stalks and narrow, linear leaves have a delicate appearance that belies their habitat.

### Green Island

A recent botanical survey on Green revealed a small population of 30 to 40 rock elms, a state threatened tree known from only six other sites, including one other island, in Ohio. They are on the south side of the island, very near a nesting colony of double-crested cormorants. The cormorants nest high in trees and if the colony spreads to the rock elms, the bird's droppings could, over time, kill the rare trees. Also found in this vicinity but set back from the shoreline area is a small cave with a long narrow crack of an opening.

Like the harebell, which is found on a narrow band of Green Island limestone ledge shoreline, the northern bog violet is another endangered inhabitant of rock crevices where soil is minimal. It looks very much like a common blue violet, but its habitat is distinctive. It has only been recorded from seven other sites in Ohio, all but one of which are on various Erie islands. The tufted fescue sedge and the rock sandwort, two more lovers of limestone, are also known from Green Island. Both flower in May-June and neither can tolerate overgrowth by other species, which may explain why they haven't been recorded on Green since the 1960s. The island is being overrun by non-native species that move in, quickly take over the habitat and crowd out the native plants.

Survey staff working on Dr. Richard King's Lake Erie water snake project were excited to find these animals on Green during 2002 where they hadn't been seen in many years. With the exception of a sliver on the west end owned by the U.S. Coast Guard, the ODNR Division of Wildlife owns Green Island and permission to visit must be obtained from them.



*"Harebells are found on both Starve and Green Islands."*

In the next newsletter we'll take a look at Rattlesnake, Sugar and Ballast and Lost Ballast Islands.

# Nature Camp A Success



A total of sixteen children in June and 18 children in August enjoyed three days of nature activities at Nature Camp at the Bay.

Participants held water snakes, caught insects, seined for

*"I wish I was an ant-  
there are so many more places*

fish, and searched the beach for treasures. Participants were Madeline Pugh, Zoly Urge, Dallas Mohn, Molly Domer, Sarah and Alex Bastian, Arthur

Wolf, Anna Engel, Victoria Wertenbach, Elise Drake, Riley Drake, Gunnar, Wyatt, and Gage Auger, Audrey Sheehan, Josie Sheehan, Meredith Snyder, Leah Market, Andrew and Annie Neumann, Karina and Elliot Kowalski, Leah Bilski, Patrick McCann, Brian Thwaite, Brenna Hubschman, Kelsy and Paige Hill, Kaitlin Kowalski, Patrick Juhn, and Sean Mackowski. . Thanks goes to Bonnie Petro, Kim Miles, Justine Rhodes, Kristin Stanford, Lisa Brohl, Russ Brohl, John Ladd, Carmen Trisler, Valerie Mettler, Lianne Genzman, OSU Stone Lab, Middle Bass Yacht Club, Boardwalk Water Taxi, Fran and Ken Beck , Middle Bass and South Bass State Parks for their help with Nature Camp. Thanks also to our partners the Lake Erie Islands Historical Society for their support and help. Our favorite quote from Nature Camp was from Zoly Urge on the really hot day we had at Middle Bass, "I wish I was an ant-there are so many more places for you to hide from the sun!" We hope to offer Nature Camp again next summer!

## East Point Update

It is with great disappointment that we have to report that the East Point property is slated to be sold to developer Tony Valore. The first application for subdivision was not approved by the Ottawa Regional Planning Commission. The second application for subdivision was approved by the Ottawa Regional Planning Commission at their July meeting conditionally upon construction of adequate breakwater for the property and upon permitting for a sewer package plant from the OEPA.

In the meantime, time ran out for the Great Lakes Coastal Restoration Fund and Clean Ohio Fund grants received by the Put-in-Bay Township to be used to purchase the property. It is a real loss to this community that this open space will become a subdivision instead of a natural area open to all residents and visitors to enjoy.

## Committees HELP

We need people to help on a variety of committees. In particular we need people with experience writing grants, with real estate transactions, and to help plan educational programs. Linda Parker has graciously agreed to work on the newsletter for us. Please give us a call if you can help us out in any way.

## Elderhostel Programs

The LEIC-BSC will again be offering Natural history programming for the Elderhostel program this fall. The following programs are open to the public and will be held at the Put-in-Bay Town Hall at 7:00 PM. Bird Walks will also be held on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings in September. Meet at the LEIHS museum at 7:00 AM. Have your coffee early and join us!

### NATURAL HISTORY SPEAKER SCHEDULE

ALL PROGRAMS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

PIB TOWN HALL 7PM

*Birds of South Bass Island* ON Monday, September 8, 15, 22  
**Member Brad Titchener**  
*Snakes of the Lake Erie Islands* on Tuesday September 9  
**Kristin Stanford of Northern Illinois University**  
 Tuesday September 16, To Be Announced  
*Bald Eagles Here in Ohio* ON Tuesday, September 23  
**Mary Warren of the Migratory  
 Bird Center at Magee Marsh**

## Lake Erie Water Snake Easement

Meetings were held May 17 at South Bass Island and on July 24<sup>th</sup> at Kelley's Island to kick off our Lake Erie Water Snake Conservation Easement Program in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife. Carolyn Caldwell of ODNR-DOW explained the program, Kristin Stanford of Northern Illinois University spoke of the snake's biology, and Gary Miller of Eastman and Associates talked about some of the tax benefits that easements can provide for the landowner. We have had some inquiries and are working on some easements currently. If you are interested in learning more about this program, contact us. We can send you a packet of information on the easements or come and talk to you in person if you have property that qualifies.

### Stephen Small Coming to Northwest Ohio in November

Black Swamp Conservancy is sponsoring a conference series, November 10th and 11th, featuring Stephen J. Small as a speaker. Mr. Small is regarded as the nation's leading authority on financial and tax implications of land conservation and is the author of "Preserving Family Lands" Volumes I, II, and III. The conference series will be presented in Perrysburg, Findlay, Fremont, and Archbold to advise landowners, attorneys, financial planners, and real estate professionals on important strategies for protecting privately owned lands. For more information, contact the Black Swamp Conservancy at (419) 872-5263 or [bsc@wc.net.org](mailto:bsc@wc.net.org).



### 2003 Founders Day in the Park

Kristin Stanford from (Northern Illinois University)  
 AKA The Snake Lady &  
 Carol Richardson LEIC-BSC

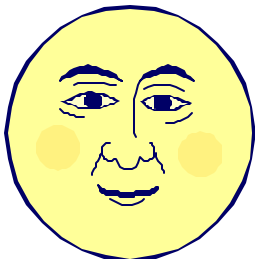
## New Board Member

We welcome Bob Russell as a new board member to replace the position vacated by Claudette Moore. Bob is a retiree and year round resident of East Point. We look forward to working with Bob!

Lake Erie Chapter  
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## ***FULL MOON POTLUCK*** ***aka*** ***LEIC-BSC Annual Meeting***

We will hold our annual meeting on Wednesday, September 10, 2003 at 7:00PM at the South Bass State Park with a potluck dinner. Come enjoy the fall weather with us as we review our first few years accomplishments and set our direction for the future! Bring a covered dish to share. Meat for the grill and beverages will be provided. RSVP to 285-5811. Please leave a message.



**COOK UP A  
COOKOUT**  
**plan a picnic**