



PO Box 461
Put-in-Bay, Ohio
43456
419-285-5811
leic_bsc@cros.net

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Lake Erie

Islands Chapter

Black Swamp

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It Would Have Been A Beautiful Park

By Kelly Faris

It would have been a beautiful park. The million dollars was there, but the owners shunned the offer of Put-in-Bay Township and sold the nine acres to a developer. Nine homes will be built. Nine families will enjoy the area within this gated community. That's



progress. It would have been a beautiful park.

I recently walked the area after a light snowfall. A gentle rain was falling. It looked like a bomb had hit or maybe a forest fire. The brush, the bushes, the small trees were gone and so too will be the turkey vulture, the bald eagle, the red-breasted merganser and the more than 150 species of migrating birds which were used this area as a temporary sanctuary during their annual pilgrimage. The bulldozer was indifferent to the brush and the chain saw didn't mind cutting into the trees. That's progress.

The blade of the bulldozer didn't mind filling up the air holes to the dens in which snakes, muskrats, field mice, and rabbits had made their winter homes. The chain saw was not impressed by the 80 rings of history which it bit through and dumped in a white heap along side the tall tree: The tenth ring saw the dedication of the M. V. Wm Market; the fifteen ring watched the Colonial burn in a black cloud that could be seen hundreds of miles away; the thirty-fifth ring watched Jim Poulos walk the streets as Put-in-Bay's 20th mayor; the fiftieth ring looked skyward and saw the Ford Tri-Motor; the seventy-third ring ushered in the Put-in-Bay Airport; and when the seed germinated, the birch shingles in a heat generated wind from the Hotel Victory fire sailed into the darkness and dropped out of the sky and sizzled in the

waters off East Point.

The blade of the bulldozer didn't mind shoving the mud, the green a cottonwood, the box elder, the cedar tree and their other stately friends into the clear waters of Lake Erie, covering up the glacial grooves and the small molluscs which made their home along the shoreline.

The metal treads of the bulldozer didn't notice the water snake, escaping the catastrophic destruction of its world. They are just plants and snakes and who cares. The bulldozer doesn't. And that's progress.

The dirt road from the south shoreline to the barn is gone. So are the barn and the house and the cottages and the red-wing black bird that darted from the small trees to peck at your head when she felt her young threatened.

This spring when the Canada geese soar out of the rain and fog and head to their usual resting spot, things will be different. Do noisy geese feel sad? But that's progress.

Progress has been made and the park land is gone. Gone also is the habitat of rare, threatened and endangered species, gone also is the protection of this habitat, gone also the opportunity to restore aquatic biological communities, and gone is the preservation and restoration of natural features that contribute to the quality of life and to the Islands heritage and to the state's natural heritage for generations to come. But that's progress.

I looked at my boot prints in the snow and mud. The light rain fell. And Stanley sat on his old red tractor and Anita sat in her creaking porch swing and watched from Heaven. And that's progress.

It would have been a beautiful park.

What's In Your Backyard?

By Debbie Woischke Part 3

This is the last of a 3-part series on the small, lesser-known islands in our backyard. This time we'll look at Buckeye and Gibraltar. Buckeye is privately owned and Gibraltar has restricted access.

Buckeye Island

Just off the northeast tip of South Bass Island is Buckeye. Sometimes it's an island unto itself and sometimes it isn't! When the water levels are low, as they have been recently, a gravel bar connects Buckeye to South Bass and access (with permission) is dry. Not only is this little gem an excellent spot for bird watching, but many mollusks have also been found on its shoreline and near waters. In addition to the purple wartyback, fawnsfoot and eastern pondmussel, the rayed bean, northern riffleshell, snuffbox, deertoe and threehorn wartyback have all been collected there. These animals range from endangered and threatened in the state to a species of concern because of their dwindling numbers.

A recent survey with an expert revealed shells of twelve species, only three of which are rare; the purple wartyback, threehorn wartyback and deertoe. Both the threehorn wartyback and deertoe have shells that are more round than elongate and the inside of both is usually white. The threehorn wartyback also has warts on its back, which again may be worn off by the time you find a shell. One of the hosts the deertoe uses is the sheephead.

Another animal found many years ago by a class from Stone Lab while seining near the shore of Buckeye was a channel darter, a slender fish only about two inches in length and now considered as endangered. They feed on mayfly and midge larvae which we know there are plenty of in Lake Erie!

A large colony of Richardson's pondweed was found on the north side of Buckeye, again growing in a gravel substrate in five feet of water.



Gibraltar Island

Owned by Ohio State and home to the biological field station Stone Lab, this little island, well populated with buildings and people and in the middle of such a busy harbor, has many of the features found on some of the other islands we've already explored. Many mollusks have been found on its shores or near waters, such as the rayed bean that was once found in the boat slip or the fawnsfoot collected 25-50 feet north of its northernmost shore. Another channel darter was found on its eastern shore, by the same class seining in the same year as the fish found at Buckeye. It has a small but beautifully carved set of glacial grooves on the west end and is also home to a small population of Lake Erie water snakes.

It has harebells clinging to its cliffs, and Richardson's pondweed grows profusely in the water surrounding it. The rock sandwort was last seen growing on the huge rocks in the water next to the cliffs on the north side of the island. This densely tufted little plant goes to fruit in June and July. Its populations are often of just a few plants in a limited area. It too has not been recently verified.

But Gibraltar still harbors its own surprises not known from any of the other little islands we've already explored. Although not verified recently, the endangered Drummond's rock cress was found growing on the wall behind the old boathouse. The only six locations known for this plant in Ohio are on four of the islands. This member of the mustard family is easily overlooked and easily misidentified. Its fruits are the key to its positive identification.

Also known from Gibraltar is the beautiful eastern fox snake. This boldly patterned snake can be found climbing trees or swimming in the lake but is usually seen in the woods and near

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cliffs. When encountered it may vibrate its tail but it is not a rattlesnake. The deep orange color of its head may lead some to misidentify it as the venomous copperhead, but the eastern fox snake is not poisonous. It feeds on small mammals, birds and eggs. If startled or handled, it may secrete a musky smelling spray which supposedly smells like a fox, hence its name.



That completes our "tour" of the smaller and lesser-known islands. Hopefully you've learned some new and interesting things about "your own backyard". All the Lake Erie islands are fascinating, each in their own right. As we've seen, some plants or animals are found on almost all the islands, and others are very restricted and rare. Truly, we do have a paradise right in our own backyard! That wise person also said, "We all share the same backyard."

In the next newsletter we'll begin exploring the larger islands of North Bass, Middle Bass, South Bass and Kelleys. As well known as they are, there may be one or two surprises in store!

Date & Time Activity Calendar-Clip and Save

5-10, 7:30 AM Bird walk with Brad Titchener, summer resident

5-10, 7 PM **"Bird Songs 101"**, slide talk by Jim McCormac, "Birds of Ohio", author, Ohio Ornithological Society President, and Ohio Bird Records Committee Secretary **LEIHS Museum**

5-11, 7:30 AM Bird walk with Jim McCormac

5-11, 7 PM **"Spring Warbler ID"**, slide talk by Tom Bartlett, MasterBander for the USGS and certified bander/trainer for the North American Banding Council **LEIHS Museum**

5-12, 7:30 AM Bird banding with Tom Bartlett

5-12, 3:30 PM Mona Rutger from **Back to the Wild**, a wildlife rehab and educational facility, will give an educational program on native wildlife and have a live bald eagle, hawks, owls and many other animals **Town Hall (See article on Page 6)**

5-12, 7 PM **"Ohio's Bald Eagles"** slide talk by James O'Connor, ODNR Division of Wildlife Bald Eagle Nest Monitoring Volunteer Coordinator **LEIHS Museum**

5-18, 7 PM Dr. Dave Horn, OSU Entomology, **"Butterflies of the Bass Islands."** **LEIHS Museum**

5-19, 7:30 AM Bird Walk with Dr. Horn

6-15, 7 PM Greg Lipps, Bowling Green State University, **"Ohio's Rare Salamanders"** **LEIHS Museum (See article on Page 8)**

7-6, 7 PM Joey Wulkowicz's **"A Life in Alaska"** Over 20 Years living & teaching in Alaska **LEIHS Museum (See article on Page 6)**

All morning bird walks will meet at the **LEIHS Museum** and we will carpool to various sites.

All evening programs will be held at the **LEIHS Museum**.

Mona Rutger's **Back to the Wild** program will be held at the **Town Hall**.

Confessions of a Former Flower Picker

by Debbie Woischke

Wildflowers comprise some of the earliest memories of my childhood years spent on South Bass Island in Lake Erie. I remember large-flowered trilliums and mayapples, blue violets and old fields full of summer's Queen Anne's Lace, vetch and red clover, which would later be taken over by goldenrods and a variety of blue and white asters. There seemed to be an endless abundance of flowers, but more than anything else, I remember picking them. I could pick my way through a patch of wildflowers faster than a great white shark could gobble its prey at a feeding frenzy. I am probably single-handedly (literally!) responsible for the decline of the blue phlox



population on South Bass. I have an old photo of myself not with a meager handful but a whole armload of them. Then there were the Dutchman's breeches, my favorite of all.

When I went hunting to pick these I took along a peck-sized grape basket.

I was not beyond picking domestic varieties either. Now, each time I round a certain corner I am reminded of many Sunday island rides after church when the car was stopped so I could pick from someone's patch of snowdrops. I was also known to sneak into neighbor's yards to pick tulips, daffodils and

grape hyacinths. And there is another photo of me with my arms encircling a collection of geraniums, recently weeded from a neighbor's flowerbed and which I had deemed not-yet-wilted-enough-to-throw-away. Indeed, looking back through many old photographs from Put-in-Bay I notice that I was almost always holding flowers, even if just a few daisy fleabanes or dandelions.

This picking compulsion continued into my teen years after I had moved to Denver, Colorado. On camping vacations or daylong trips to the mountains I would return home with at least a few specimens, usually wilted. I began to press them between pages of books, until my parents became too perturbed that our encyclopedia set was stacked haphazardly about the basement for several weeks at a time.

I began to draw flowers from looking at pictures in books. I grew them from seeds on my windowsill. I learned about pistils, stamens, anthers and sepals. But my motto continued to be, "pick, pick, pick"! I had developed a reputation for being a "flower child".

Even after starting college back once again in my home state of Ohio, I would venture up to Put-in-Bay for weekend visits and return to my dorm room with coffee cans full of Dutchman's breeches and phlox. After a while though, my appreciation for wildflowers began to change a little. I picked fewer each time I picked. I finally bought a field guide and began to study them in earnest. I learned more about names and identifying characteristics. I learned where and when I could find certain ones I'd never seen before, and how others got their names or had been used medicinally. I took a class, and went on wildflower walks. I talked to people about flowers. And pretty soon the

(Continued from page 4)

urge to pick even just one flower subsided. I noticed that I was beginning to really appreciate letting them "live in my eye and not die in my hand".

Now when I return to Put-in-Bay each year in early April, I am always anxious to see how far along the Dutchman's breeches are in blooming, and whether I can find some flower I've never seen on the island before. In the past few years I've been excited to stumble across a large secluded patch of wild geraniums on neighboring property, and a group of several jack-in-the-pulpits at a certain bend in the road where I'd only noticed one before. There's a lot to be said for this non-picking way of looking at flowers. It reminds me of something my father always liked to say; "You don't see with your hands."

This year I'm anxious to see the Dutchman's breeches again, as always, and also if that one and only hepatica that I've been able to find will be blooming where it has the last two years. Imagine if I had picked it the first time I'd seen it!

It is now April 2004 and I wrote that article 16 years ago when I was the editor of "The Catchfly". I have to smile when I read it. It was written the month before I began my employment with the ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves. Little did I know where that path would take me with my interest in flowers.

My appreciation of plants has certainly continued to evolve. I now see them in terms of being common or endangered, threatened, potentially threatened or extirpated, native or non-native, maybe even invasive. These were whole new categories to someone who used to look up flowers in a field guide according to whether they were white, purple or yellow! I quickly learned things like that the beautiful purple haze of the Lake Erie marshes in August is produced by a prolific non-native invasive called purple loosestrife. It threatens to take

over the native species because they just can't compete with it. That doesn't help the rare marsh species, like wapato and leafy tussock sedge, which are already under pressure and losing ground (literally) because of loss of wetland habitat.

My interest in plants also evolved in an entirely different direction. I started to branch out and become interested in birds, mammals and so many other features of the natural world. Geology and the glaciation of Lake Erie, for example, play a large part in what types of soil we have, and soil plays a large part in what kind of plants we have. So I have also learned that it is all very much connected and intertwined, the world of flowers and the rest of the natural world.

I guess it's only natural then that my evolving interest in the natural world and my continued love of the Lake Erie islands would lead to my being involved with the Lake Erie Islands Chapter of the Black Swamp Conservancy. I have noticed over the years that each year there seems to be less and less of those huge patches of Dutchman's breeches. So when the chapter formed in the late fall of 2000, I was there. What can we do to save some of the island's natural heritage before it's too late? No, Dutchman's breeches aren't endangered, but prime natural habitat on the island seems to be. And why wait until something is endangered to protect it?

So in the years since I first wrote that article, I have noticed excellent seasons for the sweet-smelling purple and white Dame's rocket, and the Virginia waterleaf had a great year in 2001. It grew in such profusion on Put-in-Bay Rd. near the sharp turns close to Maple Leaf Cemetery. Also, some of the aquatic plants in the bay have really made a comeback, such as eel-grass and Richardson's pondweed. And that hepatica I mentioned looking for in the spring, back in 1988? Unfortunately, it's gone now.....replaced by a new house.





We had two great programs at the LEIHS this winter. Nature Photographer Ian Adams presented a wonderful program on Butterflies and Dragonflies. Thanks go to Kristin Stanford for arranging the program and the silent auction held afterwards. We also enjoyed a slide show by Debbie Miller on the Highland Nature Sanctuary and by Rob Miller on his time with the Peace Corp in Haiti. Thanks goes to Kathy and Howard Staley for arranging this program and also for the donation of a fax machine for the LEIC-BSC and to the Lake Erie Islands Historical Society for making their facility

available to us. Thanks also to Paula Ladd for the delicious refreshments. Special thanks to Heidi Ladd for her help in data entry and printing membership cards.



Back to the Wild Program

Mona Rutger from Back to the Wild will be here on Wednesday, May 12 at the Put-in-Bay Town Hall at 3:30PM for a presentation on her Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Castalia. Learn about our native wildlife, their habitats, how and where they live, and what you can do to help preserve and protect our natural world. See live Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawks, Barred, Eastern Screech, Saw-whet, and Short-eared owls, a Bald Eagle, salamanders, Box turtles, snakes, and other native wildlife up close! Back to the Wild, a Federally and State Licensed Rehabilitation Center will present an informative educational exhibit and talk about a Wildlife Rehabilitation Centers activities and mission. The Put-in-Bay Recreation Committee is CO-sponsoring the visit and the Put-in-Bay Girl Scouts will also be the hosts of the program.



A Life in Alaska

Resident Joey Wulkowicz will present a slide show on Tuesday, July 6th, at the Lake Erie Islands Historical Society at 7:00PM. Joey spent over twenty years living and teaching in Alaska and will present a look at a life in Alaska. There will be great shots of the scenery and wildlife. Joey and Stan's business The Alaskan Birdhouse Museum is for sale and we are looking forward to this chance to see Joey's slides before they move on!

LEIHS Brochure

The Lake Erie Islands Historical Society is giving us two pages in their upcoming brochure in exchange for our help with their Elderhostel program. We know this will give us great exposure! Thank U LEIHS!



New Exhibit!!!

The LEIC-BSC were just awarded a Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Network and Fund Special Opportunity grant to purchase a traveling exhibit to take to events. We had been using the Black Swamp's exhibit but was getting more and more difficult to make the trips back and forth to get it. Thanks to BSC for allowing us the use of their display in the past! Thanks to Debbie Woischke who did the exhibit shopping for us and is busy putting together additional photos for our display at the Lake Erie Wing Watch,

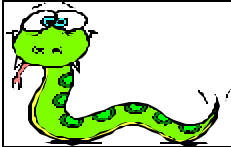
Petersen Woods Closing

The Lake Erie Islands Chapter of the Black Swamp Conservancy formally closed on the Petersen Woods property on Middle Bass Island on March 3, 2004. This is the first successfully preserved land for our Conservancy! The 1.5 acre wet woodland is near the Kuehnle State Wildlife Area and will add to the protected wetland acreage there. The woods provides habitat for the Bald Eagles that have nested at the airport across the street as well as the Lake Erie water snake. A dedication program will be held later this year. The acquisition was funded with grants from the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife, and the Natural Conservancy as well as funds from our own

local Conservancy. Thanks to all of our members for their continued support and to those locally who wrote letters of support for our efforts including the Lake Erie Islands Historical Society, the Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion Sheible-Downing Post 542, the Ohio State University Stone Laboratory, and Representative Chris Redfern.



March 3, 2004 Closing at Hartung Title
 Left to Right: Jeff Williams (Realtor)
 Carla and Pete Petersen (property owners)
 Lisa Brohl (Chair-LEIC-BSC)



Lake Erie Islands Chapter Members of the Black Swamp Conservancy

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Thanks to our new and renewing members. We appreciate your support!

Lake Erie Chapter
Black Swamp
Conservancy
PO Box 461
Put-in-Bay, Ohio
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Mailing Label

Slimy, Small & Secretive: Ohio's Rare Salamanders

By Kristen M. Stanford

Greg Lipps is a Graduate student at Bowling Green State University working on his M.S. in conservation biology. Greg previously worked at the Toledo Zoo in the Department of Herpetology and helped to develop the "Frog Town" exhibit which features the frogs and toads native to Ohio. Recently, Greg received a grant from the Division of Wildlife to help fund his graduate research on rare salamanders in Ohio.



The program will held at LEIHS museum at 7 pm, June 15th.

2004 Nature Camp at the Bay

We will again be sponsoring Nature Camp at the Bay along with the Lake Erie Islands Historical Society. The goal of Nature Camp will be to develop a healthy regard for nature and the outdoors here on the Bass Islands. This year we will have two different Camps by age group. The camp for 6-8 year olds will tentatively be held July 19, 20, and 21 from 10:00-12:00AM and the camp for 9-11 year olds will be held July 19, 20 and 21 from 1-4:00PM.

Highlights for the camp for 9-11 year olds will be a **Science Cruise** on the Biolab with OSU Stone Laboratory, **Orienteering** (Compass Scavenger Hunt), **Insect Appreciation Day** with Dr. Carmen Trisler, and **Edible Wild Plants** Ramble with Lisa Brohl.

The camp for 6-8 year olds will include a Creepy Crawly Program with Dr. Trisler and take home **Nature Crafts** for each day with Kim Miles. Both Camps will include a **Reptile and Amphibian Hunt** with the "Snake Lady" Kristin Stanford and John Ladd will conduct an exciting **Rock Contest**.

To obtain a schedule and registration form please call Lisa Brohl at (419) 285-5811 or Susie Cooper at the LEIHS at (419)285-2804. They will also be available at the LEIHS Museum in May. A letter will be sent home with students from Put-in-Bay School as well.

We are working on a Nature Camp Week to be held on Middle Bass Island possibly for the second week in August. Will keep you posted on updates in the Put-in-Bay Gazette and with a flyer as we settle the details.

