

Haehnle Sanctuary News



Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary

Owned By Michigan Audubon

Maintained and Operated by The Jackson Audubon Society

Preserving and Protecting our Natural World



Spring 2019

Oak Barrens Habitat Restoration at Haehnle



*The first, most difficult step in restoring an oak barrens is to remove all plant species that don't belong.
The volunteer work crew has done a marvelous job!*

Many Haehnle projects are ten percent inspiration and ninety percent perspiration. Habitat restoration can be an especially labor intensive proposition, a daunting task for an all volunteer organization.

The concept of organizing a work crew for this project started in the fall of 2017 by Haehnle Committee Chair Gary Siegrist. Having already had success with a work crew at The Dahlem Center, it was decided to try one at Haehnle and work near the main parking lot.

This site had once been an oak barrens according to vegetation maps found in [The Atlas of Early Michigan's Forest, Grasslands, and Wetlands](#).

This book is an interpretation of the 1810 to 1856 central land office surveys and notes on plant life and soils that surveyors recorded in their travels. Oak barrens are fire dependent habitats where the plant community is exposed to fire and drought.

The soils are usually low-nutrient sands or loamy sands and are dominated by scattered groups of black oak and white oak .

The group headed by Paul Rice and Phil Clark started by working on Wednesdays from 9 to 12. They have since expanded to two to three work days a week, usually starting at 10 a.m. and working into early afternoon. With over two acres already cleared of invasive plants species and native trees (boxelder is one example) that would not have been found in this type of habitat, the crew has made remarkable progress.

A job well done and thank you very much for all your volunteer hours that is helping restore this valuable habitat. For more information on either volunteering or donating to this project, please send a request to gwsiegrist@gmail.com

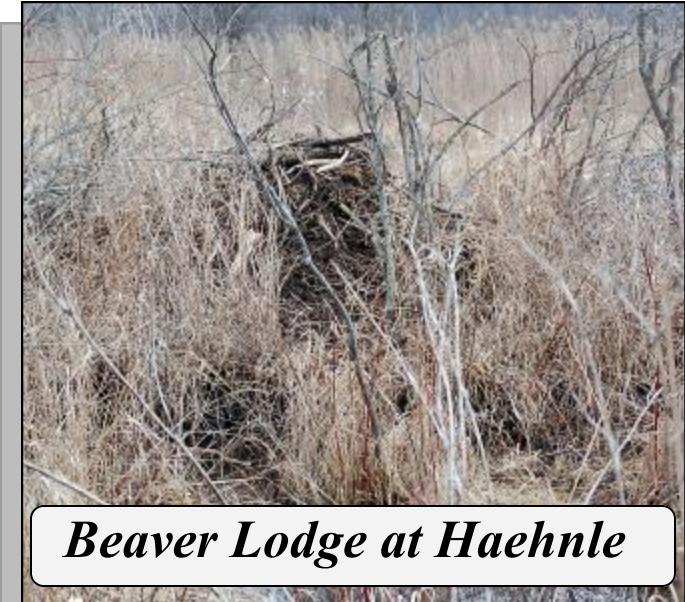
Gary Siegrist

Beaver Return To Haehnle!

Prior to European settlement beaver were widespread throughout North America wherever there were trees. However, in the 1700s and early 1800s trapping decimated beaver numbers in response to the demand in Europe for their fur. Nowhere in the United States was the economic impact of the fur trade greater than in Michigan. By the time of the War of 1812, Michigan's beaver population was largely depleted in the Lower Peninsula. For example, they were reported extirpated in Washtenaw County by 1836.

Beaver populations began to recover in the 1920s because of restrictions on trapping and nuisance beaver being live-trapped and moved to unoccupied locations in the Lower Peninsula.

Nearly a hundred years later, Lathe Claflin and I found evidence that beaver once again were living at Haehnle. On April 27, 2015 we found an active dam at the inlet stream to Mud Lake Marsh. Nearby was an older inactive dam so they had gone unnoticed for some time.



Beaver Lodge at Haehnle

Beaver are the largest rodents in North America. Weighing between 30 and 60 lbs. and measuring 36 to 43 inches from head to tail, they should be hard to overlook. However, beaver are mostly active at night so most of the observations at Haehnle are of their work: dams, lodges and cuttings.



Beaver are often closely associated with aspen near marshes, swamps, streams and lakes. That is not the case at Haehnle however since few aspens are growing near sanctuary wetlands. While they often are known to construct canals containing water to carry cuttings from felled timber, we have found little evidence of them doing that at the sanctuary. Apparently, the cambium layer of woody plants other than aspen is eaten during the winter at Haehnle while non-woody plants are their primary summer food.

Most of the beaver activity has been seen at the inlet and outlet of Mud Lake Marsh and less in the marsh itself. The first dams appeared on aerial photos after 2013. Since then we have found beaver lodges in the backwaters of the dams and in dense stands of cattails in the marsh. Constructed of twigs, mud and aquatic plants, their lodges are hard to miss often standing four to five feet above the water and eight or more feet across. A massive lodge in Wisconsin measured 16 ft. high and 40 ft. long!

Beaver are also living along the Portage River. Here they construct bank dens with underwater entrances under tree roots. Evidence of their activity includes cut small cottonwoods and branches of red maple and willow stripped of their bark.

Continued on Page 3

Haehnle Beaver (cont'd)

The impact of beaver dams on the hydrology of the sanctuary is hard to determine. A dam at the upstream side of the Seymour Road culvert would have reduced water flow into Mud Lake Marsh. It was soon removed to prevent damage to the road.

Dams on the outlet from Mud Lake Marsh are a contributing factor for high water levels in the marsh. Probably a bigger factor is the expansion of non-native narrow-leaved cattails into the outlet stream, thereby restricting flow. In addition, sediment and fallen trees have increased flooding along the Portage River consequently affecting water levels of sanctuary wetlands.

The return of beaver to Haehnle adds to the biodiversity of the sanctuary as they become a part of a natural functioning wetland ecosystem.

By Ron Hoffman



Photograph by Lathe Clafflin

Tree felled by beaver near Haehnle wetland

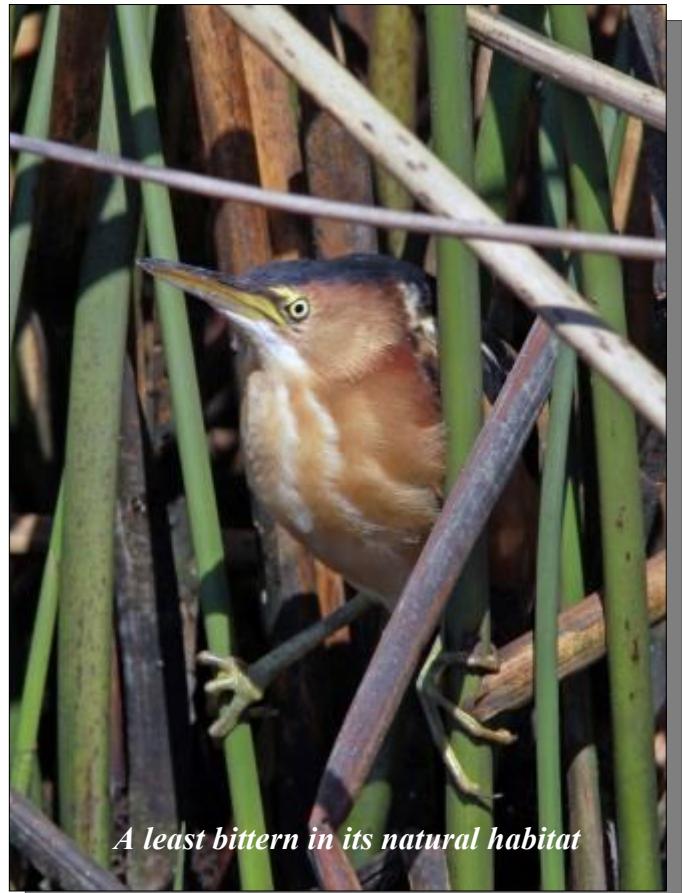
Haehnle Home to Smallest Member of Heron Family

The least bittern is the smallest member of the heron family. It measures only about 12 inches from head to tail. It is also one of the most secretive, spending much of its time in dense stands of cattails, sedges and bulrushes that make up its preferred habitat.

It's laterally flattened body allows it to easily slip between densely packed stems of emergent vegetation. It often hunts over deeper areas of marsh by clinging to plant stems. Prey consists primarily of small fish, large insects, tadpoles, other amphibians, crayfish, and occasionally small mammals and birds. Least bitterns often construct feeding platforms of bent vegetation at productive feeding sites.

Least bitterns arrive in Michigan in late April or early May. They build nesting platforms a foot or two above the water by bending down live and dead stalks and adding short stems and sticks. There they lay clutches of four to five eggs.

Because of their secretive nature, seeing these birds can be a challenge. They are often heard before they are seen. During the breeding season in May and June, the males emit a rapid series of dove or cuckoo like calls consisting of three to five "coo" notes. Haehnle's Mud Lake Marsh is often home to several breeding pairs of least bitterns each summer.



A least bittern in its natural habitat

"A Gift From the Marsh"

*When the crane was on the wane,
Some thought there were not any:
But now it's plain the flock did gain,
'Cause now we see so many!*

*Like any other blessed event
It did not happen by accident.
We owe our thanks to those few
Who had the wise, long-sighted view
And worked so hard on sanctuary
For stately Sandhill Cranes so wary.*

*And dedicated each swamp acre
In the sanctuary of Bernard Baker,
And those acres marked so plainly,
"In memory of Phyllis Haehnle,"
So that we Johnny-come-lately's now may
see, With little effort - without a fee -
Those graceful and majestic birds,
A beautiful sight - beyond our words,*

*Gliding smoothly in loose formation,
Modestly ignoring our awed ovation,
Then stretching out both neck and feet
Til Sandhill Crane and roost do meet;
There to spend a peaceful night
Resting for next morning's flight.*

*When we think upon the thrill
Of all those watching from our hill,
Their effort has not been in vain
Which brought to us the Sandhill Crane.*

Lewis DeFoe was an enthusiastic birder and member of Jackson Audubon for many years until his death.

He wrote many poems, including this one.

*We wish to thank the many people
who have so generously supported
The Haehnle Sanctuary in recent months.*

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These Birds Also Call Haehnle Home



1. Wilson's Snipe

Spring is the best time to see this shy bird. It is then that the male can be heard during its courtship flights high over the marsh. Listen for the hollow winnowing sound made by its outer tail feathers as they vibrate rapidly in the air during the birds head first dives.

After courtship is over these birds retreat to the concealment of marsh vegetation. Only when closely approached will they flush from cover with a zigzag flight pattern to confuse predators.

The snipe's eyes are placed far back on its head, allowing the bird to see both forward and backward.

2. Sora Rail

This common member of the rail family is seldom seen due to its secretive habits. Its laterally flattened body enables it to slip easily into dense stands of reeds and cattails where it spends its time.

The Sora has two main calls, a clear whistled coo-wee, and a strange descending whinny, or a series of wee-wee-wee notes. In spite of a lack of webbed feet, it swims quite well for short distances, a valuable ability when negotiating the marshes.

Sora Rails feed on seeds, plants, aquatic insects and mollusks.

3. American Bittern

This heron family member is the most difficult to find due to its cryptic coloration, which blends in with reeds and cattails. When approached, it freezes with bill pointed into the air making it very difficult to spot.

An American Bittern will always face an intruder, moving ever so slowly to keep its camouflaged breast toward danger.

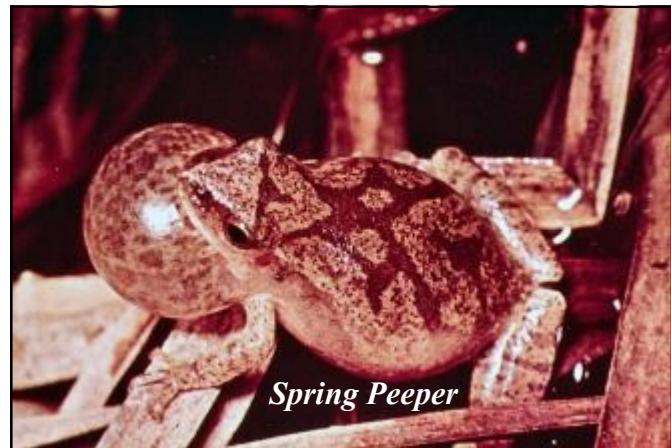
It's deep, resonant call variously described as "pomp-er-lunk," or "onk-a-BLONK," or as sounding like a vomiting dog, is most often heard in morning or evening.

It's Spring Frog Time at Haehnle!

Haehnle's marvelous wetlands are home for many, many water-loving creatures. None are more vocal this time of the year than the native frogs. Five species are now or soon will be calling and will be followed by three more later in the spring. Some reproduce in temporary "vernal" pools while other inhabit permanent wetlands and ponds. Current vocalists include:

The **spring peeper** is a tiny, tan and brown frog with a body length of only one to one and one half inches. Its back is marked with an ornate X. To see and hear a spring peeper, click here.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZX9uODHi0zg>



Chorus Frog



The **wood frog** squeezes all of its calling and mating activities into four or five days, and then disappears back into the woodlands from which it came. Click here to hear the wood frog. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ah_slM_F34,



And last but not least is the **American toad**. That is the one we find in our gardens and window wells and often call the "garden toad or hop toad."

It may hold the record for the longest winded frog in North America. Its trilling call sounds like someone blowing a sport official's whistle and may last thirty seconds or more. To see and hear an American Toad click here

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6-8pC8o5fw>

The **striped chorus frog**. It is about the same size as the peeper, with a white mustache along its lip-line, a black mask over its eyes and three dark brown stripes down its back.. To see and hear a singing chorus frog click here.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x171BHptfI>



The spotted **northern leopard frog** is now adding its snoring call to the chorus of smaller frogs. Because it has a much lower tone, this call is sometimes overlooked when it is competing with the higher pitched sounds of other species. To see and hear a northern leopard frog click here.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luXzpmcq3QM>





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*Thank You,
Your Support is Greatly Appreciated!*



Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary
c/o Jackson Audubon Society
P.O. Box 6453
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*Official News Letter
For The
Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary*



Volunteers Needed Spring Work-bee

The spring workbee will be held Saturday, April 20 from 9:00 to around 12. Meet at the Tobin Childs Kiosk off the main parking lot on Seymour Rd. Among other activities we will be installing a memorial bench, rewiring some labels on designated trees, clearing trails, painting benches and signs.

Weather permitting we will also do some restoration work in advance of some late spring planting. We have a wide variety of tasks so we can accommodate anybody – no experience needed. Light work gloves are useful. Contact Gary Seigrist (517-522-5990) for more information.